

Pascale Théorêt-Groulx

9.8 Mètres par seconde par seconde

Curator: Caroline Andrieux

Small Gallery



IX Ways of Falling

1.
You are in an art exhibition looking for the text that accompanies it. What are you expecting? A clue, some initial guidance to help you approach an environment that can be so regulated, so controlled? Or something that can help you learn more about the artworks you see? What if the writer refuses to give you this satisfaction? Would such a situation make you uncomfortable? Would it be an act of arrogance or abandonment? A pointless joke? A contemporary art trick? Would you simply lose interest? Or would you try to develop new tools of interpretation from what you already have around you? What exactly do you want to know?

What if you just look at the sheet in your hands, and consider its colours, brightness, texture, smell, as well as its voice? Does the paper talk to you? Does it breathe? What is its weight and its relation to your body's weight? If you are still following me, you can also try this: put more pressure on the paper with your fingers; then just let it fall on the floor. See what happens. Pick up the paper. Watch how you grab it from the floor. Are you reading a digital version of this text? Imagine translating the exercise to your device. In the likely case that it would get damaged, who would be responsible?

You may find my proposal childish and simply resist doing it. What other forces around you can you resist?

2.
Too many questions. Some people don't even realize that social networks, like Twitter or Facebook, are based on sentences such as "What's happening?" or "What's on your mind?" They seem like kind gestures, dialogical openings. We don't consider them persuasive. We just answer them—we *like* them. We've reached a point where a lack of response is considered "social suicide." We are encouraged to be constantly in motion, full of intentions and motivations, and to share them. We rarely acknowledge manipulation as being part of the process. It's sort of like gravity: it prevents us from drifting away into outer space but can also make us fall from a tall building.

3.
You are standing in a crowded, fast-moving train at rush hour. You hold on tight to the cold bar. Your body is pressed between the other passengers' bodies. You can hear their breath, feel their sweat. You're intimately close, yet far away from these strange bodies. Eyes down. You may feel less lonely surrounded by people going in the same direction (where's the train going anyway?). You think if the train crashes, these bodies might serve as a sort of padding to absorb the impact.

4. Sigmund Freud described humour as the positive side of the superego, the part of the psyche that controls our impulses, especially those that are not socially acceptable. In Freud's words, "to the superego, thus inflated, the ego can appear tiny and all its interests trivial; and, with this new distribution of energy, it may become an easy matter for the superego to suppress the ego's possibilities of reacting." I dropped my birthday cake on the floor while I was writing these lines. An artist had baked it for me. I sent a picture of the fallen cake to a friend. She said: "now that looks like a work of art!"

5. The word "bubble" is used in economics to describe market processes of financial speculation and overvaluation that seem inconsistent with future predictions. It has to do with illusion, imagination, and fantasy. People panic; the bubble becomes real, then bursts. In physics, underwater bubbles can minimize the impact of a diver's entry in the water. A bubble machine injects compressed air into the water, providing a safe air cushion and a clear visual reference for the water's surface. The machine creates many bubbles per second. We are safe with the bubble machine. But the life of bubbles is short; they all burst. Do you feel a certain pleasure from popping bubble wrap?

6. Philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva advocates a radical shift in how we approach matter and form, as a way to completely reconsider the world "as we know it." This means abandoning "the formal tools of the Understanding" and "[refiguring] the World as a complex whole without order." This involves taking a lot of risks. Confronting gravity. Unthinking the world, a world where we have identified laws, determined a notion of

universality and where we keep brutalizing the Other through our reasoning. Art may be confined to this world, but it can still challenge existing ways of knowing and shift perspectives. It can displace the position of individual subjects from the ideal, universal self—subjects who feel the ground on which they fall but are unable to perceive how the ground feels them.

7. In the Haudenosaunee creation story, Sky Woman became curious and fell from a hole in the sky. Her fall created Place-Thought, a concept articulated by writer Vanessa Watts to refer to land as alive and thinking.

8. The journey through space and time is not only the domain of scientists.

9. Where the sun sets: the Occident is a fall.

Luiza Proença, June 2019

For the exhibition *9.8 Mètres par seconde par seconde* by Pascale Théorêt-Groulx at the Darling Foundry, Montreal. With the help of thoughts by the artist, friends, and Bruce Albert and Davi Kopenawa (*The Falling Sky*, 2013), Denise Ferreira da Silva ("On Difference without Separability," 2016), Hannah Arendt ("The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man", 1963), Jean-Luc Nancy (*Corpus*, 2008), Sigmund Freud ("Humour," 1927), Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Julio Ramos (*Mar Arriba*, 2009), Vanessa Watts ("Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans," 2013). A special thanks to Ji-Yoon Han.