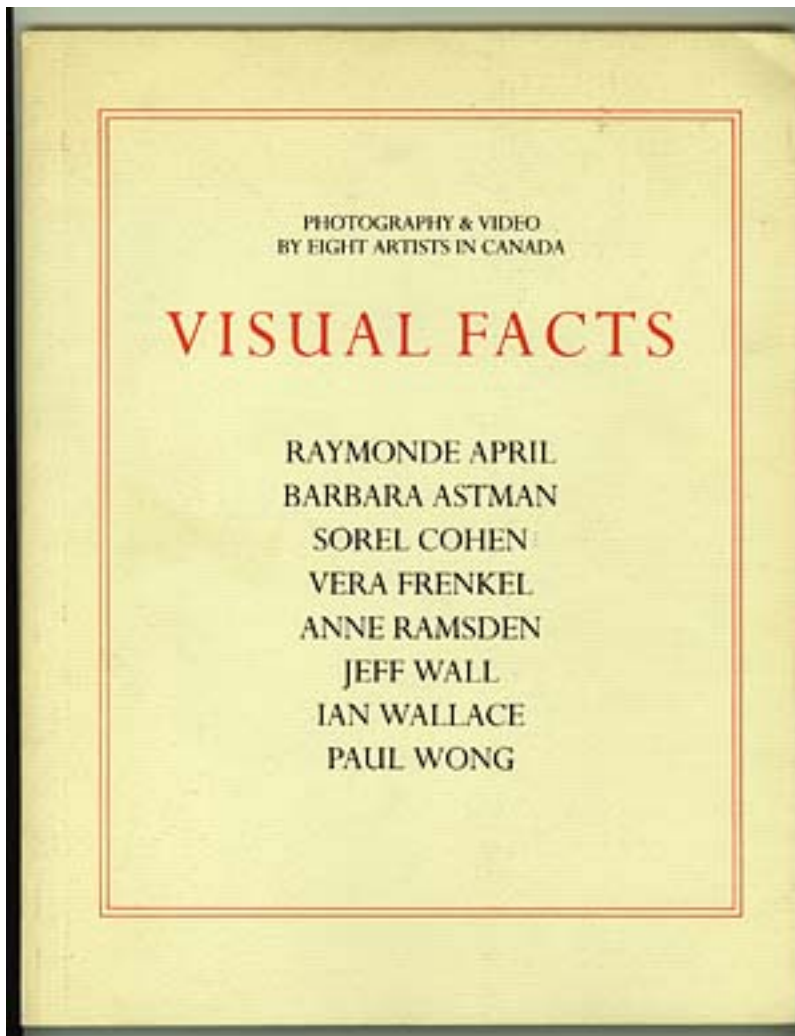


[Tooby, Michael]. — «[Raymonde April]». — *Visual facts : photography and video by eight artists in Canada.* — Glasgow : Third Eye Centre, 1985. — P. 12

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO BY EIGHT ARTISTS IN CANADA

VISUAL FACTS

MICHAEL TOOBY



(...)

RAYMONDE APRIL'S work suggests autobiography rather than asserts the autobiographical in order to arrive at a generalised position. Her work is narrative, mixing the apprehension of the single image with the unfolding sequence that the series reveals. Though she sets forth dreamlike scenes, where shapes and shadows suggest shifting silhouettes and spaces, her use of everyday objects and occasional views of "work in progress", as well as glimpses of a figure, suggest a candid, perhaps documentary, intention belying the ethereality. Of course the question of who the person is who inhabits this world — and as an earlier title suggests (*Portrait de l'Artiste*, 1981), it is herself — prompts the question of what has governed the representation of this person's world. Are these images poetic views of a real place, in the case of *Portrait de moi-même...* and *Personnages...*, or, as suggested by the later work, are they metaphoric narrative, a fictional set of devices? In a strange way April's French background puts the viewer in touch with a possible parallel, the plotless *nouvelle roman*. There is also a reminiscence of Sontag's description of the photograph in the New World as memory: people, Sontag feels, have fewer things around,



. . the used things, warm with generations of human touch, that Rilke celebrated in *The Duino Elegies* as being essential to a human landscape. Instead we have our paper phantoms, transistorised landscapes. A featherweight portable museum.¹⁸

However it would be wrong to be seduced by the mysteries of April's work and see it as either aesthetic or whimsical in comparison to the clarity of some of the other work in the exhibition. In

her most recent work her image is used in impossible relationships with other pictorial devices, creating an ambiguous image of the goddess in a traditional sense, vying with an heroic goddess figure in a feminist sense. This work, with its more confrontational scale, shows how the intimacy of her earlier work is itself contrived, and subversive of the commonly used idiom of the crafted black and-white studio or 'candid' photograph.

¹⁸ Susan Sontag : *On Photography*, Harmondsworth, 1978