Ralickas, Eduardo; «Raymonde April : Equivalences».— Montréal : Occurrence, 2010.— feuillet.— Also in English.

RaymondeApril
ÉQUIVALENCES

Equivalences 1 – 4 is a project by Raymonde April developed in collaboration with curator Eduardo Ralickas. It consists of three distinct series of photographs and one video work shown in three Montréal spaces: Occurrence, espace d'art et d'essai contemporains; Les Territoires; and Galerie Donald Browne. Most of the photographs, which contain a significant number of landscapes, are unpublished and were taken between 2005 and 2009. The project also includes found images and some older works. Each of the three exhibitions contains ten to fifteen images, including landscapes, portraits and scenes of everyday life captured with large-format, 35mm and digital cameras in a variety of urban or rural settings such as Montréal, Beijing, Buenos Aires, Eastern Québec and Southern Alberta. While foregrounding landscape (and, occasionally, figures within space), these series also contain prosaic elements that assume poetic form by means of the transformative power of photography. This project grew out of a desire to understand April's creative process and to translate it into spatial terms. It is a topography of sorts which brings to the fore the way in which April's photographic work functions by spatializing meaning—a process that is unique in the contemporary photographic landscape.

The idea of a four-part exhibition is the outcome of a dialogue between the artist and the curator that focuses on April's exceptional creative method, developed since the late 1970s, whereby disparate photographs stemming from a vast and ever-growing

archive are transformed into a visual language, as photographic configurations on the wall. April's way of spatializing photographs is regarded as a "system" which, like language, lacks a centre. This system allows the artist to generate endless propositions or "series" that can be likened to photographic "sentences" that are formulated by means of an image-based "grammar" sensitive to aesthetic factors such as form, colour, shape, size, placement, and sequencing.

For instance, an image of a landscape can signify a site or give rise to an aesthetic feeling; however, both experiences stem from a given image's value with respect to all other images that surround it. Each image therefore inflects the meaning of other images, and together they comprise a "system" that spatializes the differential nature of language. Unlike language, however, which is shared by a community of speakers in an interchangeable and open way, April's series are highly personal and can only be "spoken" by the artist herself. Moreover, such speech acts are inextricably bound up with the notion of space.

In its initial stages, the project was— perhaps naively— designed according to this linguistic model: the curator invited the artist to produce several photographic series that would possess the "same" overall meaning even if they were comprised of different images. Each gallery was to house one of these photographic series that would function as "equivalents" dispersed throughout the city. (A video work was later added in keeping with this spirit of artistic translation.) As viewers travelled—in time and space—from one gallery to another, their experience of each series would have been inflected by their visual memory of the work installed in the other two galleries. Even though each series may be regarded as a self-sufficient entity, their distanced juxtaposition was designed to generate similarities in structure. The four units echo each other and instead of being related in narrative or chronological terms, they were intended as "equivalents": transitional, ephemeral forms in time and space. Guided by the images themselves and by their spatial configurations in each gallery (whose layouts also inflect the process of "reading"), viewers would thereby make a mnemonic map of April's work. Ultimately, the aim was to have them experience a sense of resonance and, perhaps, of déjà vu.

As work on the project progressed, this easily adaptable "method," which was developed spontaneously between artist and curator, nevertheless engendered some surprising results. In fact it failed to produce that which it was intended for. However, such a "failure" was productive. As the work resisted the method designed to encompass

it, it produced a generative, visual analysis of April's visual language. Although an attempt was made to create disparate artistic entities that would nonetheless afford viewers the "same" aesthetic experience four times over, the logic of April's selection process tended to emphasize the autonomous nature of each series. To balance each body of work in terms of such considerations as form and content, each series was regarded as a self-subsisting entity that needed to be resolved on its own terms—that needed its own phrasing. It quickly became apparent that the curator and the artist had in fact engendered a "system" of a higher order. As the artist worked to produce four bodies of new work according to a self-imposed conceptual framework, the work itself developed its own, hybrid status. The resulting photographic series and the video piece are to be regarded, simultaneously, both as works bearing April's signature style and as a reflection on how such a signature style emerges in the first place. At once work and work addressing its own process of construction—or what one usually calls "method"— **Equivalences 1 – 4** is the aftermath of a reflection on photography, space, repetition, and memory.