

KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN READER

The broom, the spoon and her shoes

In her exhibition *The broom, the spoon and her shoes*, at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Myriam Jacob-Allard braids cultural, personal, and film-historical references into an arresting reflection on matrilineal inheritance, transformation, and the experience of time.

The central work is *Les Immortelles*, a collage film in four chapters, formally ranging between symbolism and abstraction. Wraith-like objects emerge on a pitch-black background: windows, plants, body parts, as if these were images from a collective memory. The soundtrack, taken from found footage of vampire films, is interwoven with uncanny noises; a storm, the creaking of a door, the ticking of a clock. This generates a dense atmosphere, something between dream, memory, and cinematic citation.

The film positions itself as a homage to the classic vampire genre and revolves around the vampire bite as a central act of transformation—and of deep, physical connection between two or more individuals. The vampire's bite—traditionally staged as a singular, transformative moment—is understood here as a multilayered act: fate is transmitted not only vertically from mother to daughter, but also circularly within the generation—between sisters, between granddaughter and grandmother, as a sign of shared responsibility, of an unspoken pact. Immortality thus becomes not only a burden of origin, but also a weight carried in the present.



© Myriam Jacob-Allard

Les Immortelles is also a deliberate reinterpretation of the vampire film, in which the figure of the mother is often overlooked—if she appears at all. Here, by contrast, she takes center stage: not as an antagonist, but as the source and transmitter of an ambivalent legacy. The film shifts the narrative away from patriarchal images of seduction and violence toward an intimate, familial dynamic full of closeness and empathetic silence.

This thematic reorientation is also reflected on a formal level: the characters are portrayed by the actual family members of the artists—mother, sister, niece. Their bodies, their gestures, and their interactions carry the real traces of lived relationships. The line between fiction and familial memory begins to blur—the vampiric is not only performed, but physically remembered.



© Myriam Jacob-Allard

In the exhibition space, the film is involved with a second, as it were spectral installation: a loose collection of papier-mâché objects—hands, a broom, an iron, cowboy boots—that perform a series of simple, mechanical movements. Driven by small motors, they seem like the animated remnants of domestic routines. The objects move around, apparently aimlessly, within an area suggesting the floor-plan of an apartment. People are absent; only their traces remain. The banal—tapping, bobbing, twisting—comes to express absence and stasis in the ongoing rhythm of the everyday.

A hand, supplied with a wristwatch, carries out a particularly striking gesture, evenly tapping on the floor with its index finger. The resulting sound recalls the ticking of a clock—a symbol of measured time passing. This motif runs throughout the exhibition as a key acoustic image: the ticking, whirring, clicking, and scratching sounds made by the objects become an orchestra of the ordinary, recalling transience and undercutting it at the same time. It is the sound of life, turning absurd through repetition.

This generates a sharp tension between the exhibition's two poles: the kinetic objects embody transitoriness and the linearity of time, while *Les Immortelles* imagines the experience of an existence that refuses to come to an end. One side shows the disappearance of the body, the other its eternal return. In both cases, the questions are of presence and absence, action and stasis, the weight of inherited histories.

Despite the differences in medium, Jacob-Allard finds a visual, thematic bridge: the film's fragmented bodies meet their reflections in the sculptural limbs of the objects. The things move, as if they were animate; the bodies appear lifeless and artificial. The interchange between enlivened and performed, thing and body, makes this exhibition into a dense reflection on time, repetition, inheritance, and identity.

— Maximilian Rauschenbach

The exhibition was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec.