

# Marie-Eve Beaupré's Top 3: Quebec Quality

VARIOUS LOCATIONS JAN TO DEC 2010

by MARIE-EVE BEAUPRÉ



Marcel Dzama *La Verdad Está Muerta / Room Full of Liars* 2007 Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner New York

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## 1. [Marcel Dzama: Of Many Turns](#) at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Complex, strange, shape-shifting and burlesque, [Marcel Dzama's](#) oeuvre captivates the imagination. The images from his first [Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal](#) solo exhibition last winter have stayed with me since. (Disclosure: I was contracted to curate a show for the MACM after Dzama's ended.) The exhibition united 60-odd works created over the three previous years—drawings, sketches, collages, films, paintings and installations were brought together in a way that gave a well-rounded view of his slightly overwhelming body of work. But isn't this idea of excess intrinsic to Dzama's multiple-personality career, drawing from myriad artistic and filmic references? Isn't he an artist "Of Many Turns"? The diorama *On the Banks of the Red River*, consisting of 300 ceramic sculptures, attests to the artist's talent at *mise en scène*. Overall, this show made it clear that Marcel Dzama is one of the biggest names of his generation. Here's to what's to come.



Eija-Liisa Ahtila *The House* 2002 Video still © Crystal Eye Ltd Helsinki Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery New York and Paris / photo Marja-Leena Hukkanen

## 2. [Eija-Liisa Ahtila](#): [INT. STAGE-DAY](#) at the Darling Foundry and DHC/ART

It's clear that 2010 was the year of solo exhibitions. This is true of a wide range of institutions, not just the museums, and I'd like to congratulate in particular the curating that happened in so-called alternative and university art spaces like [Vox](#) (for its exhibition of [John Baldessari](#)'s work) and the [Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery](#) (for its reflection on the work of [Nelson Henricks](#)). Though many solo shows were worthy of mention, the video works by [Eija-Liisa Ahtila](#) remain my favourite discovery. The retrospective exhibition of this Finnish artist's installations was split into two halves thanks to an innovative and judicious partnership between the [Darling Foundry](#) and the [DHC/ART Foundation](#). While the body of work exhibited at DHC introduced us to 20-plus years of art production, the installation at the Darling Foundry, *Where is Where?*, offered viewers proof of Ahtila's talent at dramatizing a psychological perspective on space and time. It was a memorable piece.



Marie-Claude Bouthillier *Dans le ventre de la baleine* 2010 Installation view / photo Bettina Hoffmann

### 3. Marie-Claude Bouthillier: In the Belly of the Whale at Optica

Painting lovers were well served this year, since it seems to have been the province's most popular medium. In Montreal, over a decade after *Peinture Peinture*, 16 galleries joined together under the banner *Peinture extrême*, while in Quebec City, the third edition of the event *Pan! Peinture* focused on new artists in painting and drawing. Marie-Claude Bouthillier and her fall exhibition at Optica stood out among the many artists who successfully revived pictorial practices with finesse and intelligence. Her installation *Dans le ventre de la baleine* consisted of a whole painterly environment expounding the motifs that recur in her work. This all-over approach gave us the impression of living in one of her paintings. For it, Bouthillier reached beyond convention by covering the gallery's space in painted canvas pieces and studio paraphernalia, offering us a reflection on the materiality of painting. It was a project that offered a poetic interpretation of our relationship with her work while implying a notably well organized and novel take on the theme of "extreme painting"—that is, painting where it's least expected.

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