

## REVIEWS



LEFT: Installation view of Lois Andison's *the floor's the limit* 2009. 3 DVDs (Kerry 9 min 54 sec; Alyson 14 min 23 sec; Caitlin 21 min 35 sec) PHOTOS MICHAEL OULLEN

BELOW: LOIS ANDISON, *1,000 catastrophes* 2009. Antique bell jar, wood, custom electronics, Bible paper 1.8 m x 64.7 cm x 63.5 cm



TORONTO  
OLGA KORPER GALLERY

## LOIS ANDISON

by Ashley Johnson

The world that we are confronted with on a daily basis is a complex, multi-layered chaos that is continually flexing and moving. Inanimate objects assume personalities, while spatial and formal boundaries seem to be constantly under attack. Machines both imitate us and subjugate us to their will.

Lois Andison's multimedia work addresses our experience of reality as mediated by movement. Sometimes she addresses this dynamic's emotional dimension, as in her 2009 kinetic piece *Heart-breaking 91*. Here the letters making up the word "heartbreaking" are displayed in every possible combination, giving us 91 new meanings of breaking down. In other artworks, her machines come to life when activated by human contact.

Given this, *the floor's the limit*, the centrepiece of her fall show at Olga Korper Gallery, is somewhat surprising. A handsome metal column bearing three large video screens descends from the ceiling in a triangular formation. The sculpture's configuration encourages the viewer to move around the work; one is never able to perceive it in its entirety. This parodies the camera's dilemma: on each screen, it struggles to catch up with its subject—roller skaters—in the process

setting up a rhythm that resonates with the viewer's experience.

Andison wished to create a site-specific work that addressed the space of the gallery through a mapping process. Three female roller skaters were invited to use the space as a rink individually, at different times, with Andison suggesting some movement parameters. Joseph Ebanks, Andison's cameraman, recorded each skater, also following certain guidelines.

Kerry was shot from a low angle; we see mostly her roller skates as they move over the concrete floor. Alyson was shot from a higher angle that allows us to see the gallery skylights as well as her skating manoeuvres. Alyson seems rather shy, and she rarely makes eye contact with the camera, but she is beautifully picturesque and tattooed all over. Caitlin, in contrast, bounces off the walls aggressively and frequently glares out at the viewer. The latter two skaters partake in roller derby, a contact-sport subculture embraced by some third-wave feminists.

Andison edited the sound component of the recordings so that only one channel is active. In the gallery, the viewer is surrounded by the sound of roller skates on concrete; our impression is that the sound comes from the observed skater.

In many ways, this new piece is an extension of Andison's earlier explorations of motion. The skaters' movements are circumscribed by the possibilities allowed by their skates. Similar limits apply when robots emulate human activity. In this work the gallery becomes active and full of personality: the protagonists map out the space and are in turn explored by the space. A sense of serenity pervades this exhibition, with roller skating somehow becoming reminiscent of ballet.