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# Brisson turns the wheel of time in holographic paintings

By HEATHER SOLOMON

For artist Carole Brisson, the past, even as far back as antiquity, has a direct connection to the present. But the link is more than just historical precedent – it's that people feel the same emotions while the wheel of time turns and produces similar events: disaster, war, violence and happier moments.



Arts Scene  
By Heather Solomon

For five years, Brisson has been fascinated by the cataclysmic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE. It buried the Roman town of Pompeii – its walls, art and even its citizens preserved by lava, only to be rediscovered in the 18th century.

While Brisson collected books and images on the subject, her husband, Georges Dyens, a noted artist and art professor at Université du Québec à Montréal, encouraged her to pair it with one of his preferred media, holography.

Holography is a method of recording light waves on a photographic surface that, when illuminated at certain angles, recreates a subject in three dimensions.

Brisson discovered how perfectly holograms fit into her Pompeii series. Not only could the viewer sense the classical statuary in space, but its fading in and out of view as one moves around her compositions makes each holographic work a portal onto the past. Ghostly columns, ruins, frescoes and marble sculptures materialize like a trick of the eye.

"There's always an element of surprise," says Brisson.

Until Dec. 8, she is surprising visitors to Espace 306 in the Belgo Building, at 372 St. Catherine St. W., where she is exhibiting 15 works under the title Traces and Transparency.

The artist's use of holography is only one way she achieves a sense of the passage of time and its existence in another dimension.

The holograms are embedded as focal sec-



Carole Brisson's paintings open a portal to the past, until Dec. 8 at Espace 306. [Heather Solomon photo]

tions between three to six layers of plexiglas. On each sheet, she has painted scenes and textures in oil pastel, then "club-sandwiched" the layers together to form diorama-like depth.

For the Pompeii series, she heated both her pastels and the surfaces to be able to blend her colours like finger-paints, suffering blisters during the creative process. Brisson also collaged her own handmade paper. Its uneven edges suggest antiquity in keeping with the theme, and it is used to represent ancient scroll writings or is torn to bits like flower blossoms in a wedding scene.

Peopling the paintings are colour laser cut-outs of classical fresco figures, as well as ruins around which, in oil pastel, the artist blends sky,

landscape, seascape and lines of texture. The cut-outs often cast shadows, affirming their existence in time.

In *Imminence*, Vesuvius erupts into a fiery orange sky as the hologram of a Roman bust looks on, the sculpture's eyes horrified yet its expression petrified as if by lava. A cut-out of columns echoes the pollution-belching chimneys of modern-day industry, allowing the past and the present to converge.

In *Murmure*, a cloaked figure that represents death sits mourning in the sea of life as souls float to heaven like white feathers. A central hologram of a child represents the child in each of us that continues to exist even as our bodies mature and age and dies along with us in the end.

But Brisson's philosophy does not allow death to be final. In her opinion, it is just another state of existence, in the same way that her Pompeians are still with us.

Rather than dictating the meaning of each work, Brisson prefers to give viewers licence to interpret. And it's easy to drift into the poetic, glassy depths of her multi-layered images.

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Brisson will create personalized plexi-boxes on commission, preserving the memories of contemporary people like those of Pompeii. She shows an example of this in a biographical work about her husband, pressing, between the plexiglas, laser copies of old photos and letters, a hologram portrait and even real olive branches representing his native Tunisia.

"You read it from right to left, like Hebrew in the Torah," she says, celebrating the Sephardi experience in the oil-pastel aqua waters and coastal hills that provide a background for the ephemera. The results are dreamy timelines worked into art.

Exhibition hours are Wednesday to Sunday afternoons.