



**Vincent Larouche - à l'extérieur**

March 10th – May 7th, 2023

No Gallery - 105 Henry Street (store no. 4) NYC, NY 10002

www.nononogallery.com

info@nononogallery.com

*Exhibition text by Geoff Rickly*

In December of 2022, I found myself just north of the Canadian border, trying not to fall sick on the short trip from the stage to the bus, after a show. I walked quickly, watching the steam from my sweat get lost in the falling snow. I was self-conscious about all the layers I'd wrapped myself in to try not to lose my voice. Somewhere, in one of my jacket's many pockets, my phone was vibrating with messages. I slipped past a few drunk guys and got on the bus. Inside, my bunk was dark. The generator was off and it was too much hassle to get undressed. I couldn't locate my phone before falling asleep. But in the morning I woke with it in my hands. The messages were from a friend. He wanted me to meet an artist he was working with, an artist who was in the same city as we were: Vincent Larouche. In the chat there was a pdf with some of his past work. He said I'd like it, so I opened the file. It seemed to be saying something about time and history. But even as sleep shook itself off, I was already in another city. No chance to meet home now. Still, the images wouldn't be quiet. Familiar characters winked at each other across the collapsing distances of era and genre. But it was more than that. There was something that moved me: a suggestion that culture — whether digital or formal, academic or terminally online — wasn't simply a space that we could enter into when we were bored. Isn't it possible, the work seemed to ask, that our own boundaries might be just as easily breached? That maybe we are the place that art may come, searching for meaning?

When I got home from tour, the friend put Vincent and I in touch. I went to the gallery to ask him about the process, why would he choose that medium to go with that subject? What was the purpose of alternating copies of those two canvases over an entire wall? But he was already in another place. There was new work-in-progress, something else was happening now: history was still fractured but the sizes of its shards were different; time fell across the canvas like rays of light. He showed me a series of large murals and a small panel, called *00:30 am*. It was a simple study: a dark room, with light coming in through an open door. Something in the painting got under my skin. I asked if I could have a moment to go outside.

After slipping out of the gallery, I returned home and got in bed. Vincent's *00:30 am* overlaid on my own bedroom doorway. I turned off the light and watched the silhouette change colors. Yellow light // green walls // darkness. But something was wrong. The shade of night was off by several degrees and the light coming through fell at the wrong angle. I began to sweat. Sleep wouldn't come. I turned on a fan for some noise, put some lavender in a cup of water and drank it. A fever came instead. I watched a third layer projected upon the boundary of my room: when I was just a boy, we lived at a T-intersection. Cars would drive towards the front of our house, reach the intersection and go either right or left. There were windows all along our front wall, with lace curtains, so that laying in bed you'd see a complex latticework of light: first a slow brightening as the car approached, followed by a focusing of the haze into two distinct beams. Finally the car would turn and the beams would streak quickly away in a motion that my father used to call "the music of passing headlights." All night I saw these headlights passing through my room. In the morning, I went back to the gallery to tell Vincent what his painting had done to me.

But already *00.30 am* had changed. Different colors // brick walls // new temperatures. I began to sweat, like I did when I was withdrawing from heroin, five years earlier. Vincent didn't seem to notice. He picked up the largest piece, a complex cityscape with intricate architectural flourishes, and flipped it on its side. My friend, the gallerist, offered me a coffee, and Vincent turned and said, "The French Way," before squeezing a measure of oil paint into the mug. Then he began to cover the city with this same paint, forming a figure laid out on a slab, some teeth in a metal bowl beside them. The gallerist turned to me, asking, "Has he mentioned the trouble he's been having with his teeth?" A high pitched noise sounded out on Henry street, a siren approaching. Vincent smiled, revealing freshly completed dental work. It shined, beautifully white and straight. I ran into the bathroom to splash some cold water on my face but the sink ran black with sticky liquid. Three of my molars came loose and fell into the sink, where they rattled around like dice. My sponsor called and told me that America's no place to get fixed up, unless I had crypto, like lots and lots of crypto.

I came out of the bathroom and we were in my living room. There were three different Vincents, in three different lights, working in three different modes. Shadows fell at disparate angles all around us, implying multiple simultaneous time frames coexisting on a single plane. History was moving in my blood, like a new drug, mixing soviet propaganda with Mexican muralism. What was that pigment that Vincent had put in my coffee? The sirens were getting closer. I asked, "When are you opening?" But none of the Vincents could hear me. We were all trapped between different layers of paint. My friend, the gallerist, ran his hand along the surface of the wall and said, "Smooth as a Ken doll."

In Vincent Larouche's *à l'extérieur* history and time have become a cage, layers of pigment codifying space and light into transparent bars in an invisible a cage. Stare too long and you might find yourself trapped inside. But I've found a way out. If you look closely enough, you might even see me walking away, the bare outline of a person, getting lost in the city, once again.