

Press Release



Simon Petepiece
Four Quarter Round

Espace Maurice

August 26th - September 23rd, 2023



“She is always trying to make something whole, something beautiful, an image capable of life apart from her.

We’re very quiet. It’s peaceful sitting here, not speaking, the composition fixed, the road turning suddenly dark, the air

going cool, here and there the rocks shining and glittering —

It’s this stillness that we both love.

The love of form is a love of endings.”

Louise Glück, *Celestial Music* (1990)

Dear friends,

I am thrilled to invite you on **August 26th from 6 to 9 pm**, to the opening reception of *Four Quarter Round*, a solo exhibition of Simon Petepiece’s new sculptural work, curated by Marie Ségolène and accompanied by a short essay by scholar and music researcher Emma Pope.

Simon Petepiece’s *Four Quarter Round* suggests the shape of a circle interrupted by a cross. It isn’t that Petepiece proposes a religious body of work. However, the shapes he draws from are undeniable geometric truths, present in flora, in fruits, in planets and orbits, in medieval and contemporary architecture alike. This is not a question of tragedy, nor of violence, but of a fragmented whole. Initially, I wanted to write to you about the constitution of the materials in relation to post-modern architecture. I wanted to write of Petepiece’s relationship to the depiction of interiors, how his drawings often illustrate discontinuous rooms that appear as

Press Release

mirages or surrealist dreamscapes. Or to describe to you one of his drawings; the one that is closest to a scene from a parable, but of an unknown theology. Really, there are dozens of entry points.

During WWII, John Piper was hired by Sir Kenneth Clark, director of the WAAC (War Artists' Advisory Committee) as an official war artist assigned to the documentation of churches and cathedrals destroyed by the bombings. In the newspapers, photographs of ruins were constantly circulating. The WAAC however, was dedicated to the creation of a comprehensive artistic record of depictions of Britain during the war. The organization prioritized neo-romantic paintings which captured the picturesque beauty and stillness of destruction, before buildings were rebuilt or cleared away. The architectural ruins set in the English landscapes, exemplified the changing ways of life, threatened not only by war, but more generally by modernization.

The morning after the Coventry blitz air raid of 1940, Piper was on site, sketching the remains of the medieval structure, in parts still burning. The resulting painting: *Interior of Coventry Cathedral*, was circulated on the cover of the souvenir guide in the 60s, as an official representation of the church prior to its reconstruction. Piper's use of primary colors suggests the presence of flames. We see the empty archways, void of their stained glass. The walls seem frail like cardboard. It is as if, reduced to its carcass, the cathedral is somehow closer to the sky. The rubble in its array of textures, glows in a yellow hue, like sand in the sun. Apparently, service was held that morning amongst the burning debris. People gathered at the center, sunlight strained through the dust.

Interior of Coventry Cathedral is a little different from some of Piper's other war paintings. The dramatic lighting and open air stillness feels like a theatrical stage. The simple shapes seem to collapse into themselves. After all, we know the stripped interior is not inside at all.

I keep thinking of the sounds following the blitz, about the way the walls now ruptured, could no longer carry the voices upwards: the absence of the echo.

Four Quarter Round will be on view until September 23rd, 2023. The gallery is open from Wednesday to Saturday from noon to 5 pm., as well as by appointment. Please get in touch if you would like to view the worklist or schedule a virtual walk through.

SIMON PETEPIECE (b. 1992, Ottawa, ON) is a self taught artist living in Montreal, QC. Recent exhibitions include a solo show at Galerie Nicolas Robert (Montreal, 2023), a duo show at City Hall Art Gallery (Ottawa, 2022) and group shows at Galerie Cache (Montreal, 2022), Glovebox (Dublin, 2022) and Prometheus Projects (Montreal, 2021). His work can be found in the City of Ottawa Art Collection and he holds a master's degree in architecture from Carleton University (2018).

Working directly with construction materials and processes, Petepiece's practice addresses and derives meaning from the unique qualities and iconography of the western built environment. In works that exist between sculpture and two-dimensional media, he uses ubiquitous products like drywall, steel studs, and insulation as both symbolic elements and substrate for drawing, painting and sculpture. The assemblies that

Press Release

arise from this process combine an inherited material language with forms gathered from a range of personal, archetypal and historical references.

EMMA “Ema” POPE (1998-) (she/her/elle) is a musicologist, researcher, composer, and classically-trained mezzo soprano based in Montréal, Quebec. Through paleographic studies (transcriptions of source manuscripts into modern musical notation, or “music translation”) of both secular and sacred sources, she provides a nuanced yet straightforward perspective to otherwise puzzling histories in music. With a breadth between the visceral, meditative impulse of the contemporary experimental noise scene and the otherworldly elements of early music, Ema happily finds source material in oftentimes unheard-of places. Research interests span across several areas and millennia, with pieces covering topics ranging from the application of Medievalist musical aesthetics in video game music, to the Deleuzian fold as exemplified by the oeuvre of Edgard Varèse (1883-1965), to musical, mathematic and medicinal-herbalistic “visions” of Benedictine abbess St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). Most recently, Ema was invited to SoundScape Festival to premiere her *Quatuor pour l'heure crépuscule* (2023) in Blonay, Switzerland, a string quartet-Mass Ordinary which implements polymeter, harmonics and fractional microtonality to translate the antiquated notation of ligature-based mensurations and modality in vocal music to a contemporary string ensemble, implementing Ockeghem’s particulate ratios of the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ solfège Mi (third scale degree).