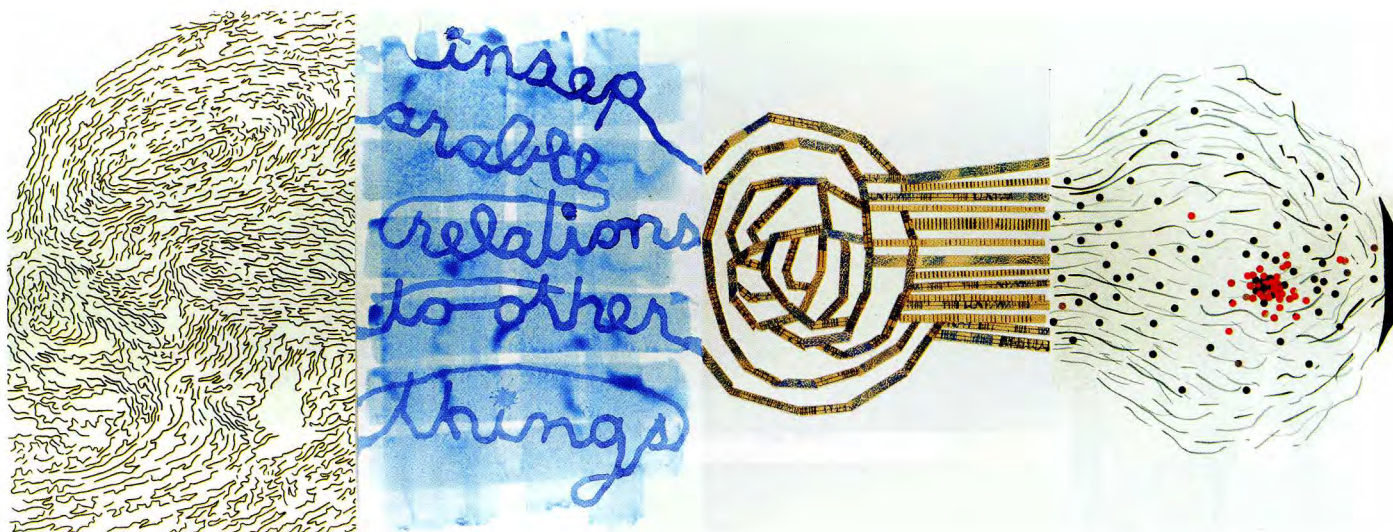


Runwaterrun



Exquisite Corpse, the surrealist parlour game that operates out of chance and surprise, never seems to die. A drawing is made, folded over so that only a small portion is visible, and is then passed on to another person, who executes the next section. Often the game dealt with the body, which would be divided into head, torso and legs. Now **Patrick Mahon**, an artist from London, Ontario, has taken the procedure and applied it to a body of water. "I am interested in drawing as a language of speculation and representation and I also like the idea of this implied river or connected stream of images." He chose 10 artists from across the country and sent them a thin photocopied fragment of a completed drawing to which they were asked to respond. (The artists are Colette Urban from Newfoundland; Sara Hartland-Rowe from Nova Scotia; Chris Down from New Brunswick; Caroline Boileau from Quebec; Sheila Butler from Ontario; Diana Thorneycroft from Manitoba; Alison Norlen from Saskatchewan; Sean Caulfield from Alberta; Ben Reeves from British Columbia; and William Noah from Nunavut. "The responses could be from any perspective they wanted to think about," says Mahon. "That deliberate vagueness left it open to more social or conceptual ideas. You want certain parameters and at the same time the freedom to disregard what they've been given and to run with something else." The only information he provided each new participant about the drawing they were sent was the kind of material that had been used. What the artist would receive in the mail was a sheet of handmade paper with only a quarter-of-an inch sliver of the previous drawing taped on.

To start the "Exquisite Corpse Water Drawings" project, Mahon sent the left- and right-hand edges of

his initial drawing to Ben Reeves and Colette Urban. Mahon's drawing comes out of his own research into structures that contain water, like water towers. He took one of his collages of that structure and turned it on its side. "I wanted to imply something moving through," he says, "or even an orifice," and Reeves and Urban responded each in their own way to that visual possibility. Reeves writes a drawing with the phrase "inseparable relations to other things," in which the letters function as both words and lines; the "p" from "inseparable" and the "r" at the end of "other" connect to the collaged arms of Mahon's collage. On the other side, a horizontal stack of lines is picked up by Urban who designs a cellular atmosphere comprised of strokes and circles that seem to explode into space. The connections are unpredictable and elegant.

In another pairing, a rivulet of blue water from a seascape by Sheila Butler connects to a moment of calm just before a tsunami overwhelms a colourful collection of holidayers on a beach. Here the connections are also unpredictable but frightening.

The completed work will take two forms: an accordion-folded structure exhibited as an original artwork and a limited edition book work in a smaller scale. "I suppose this book of water," Mahon says, "is another form of structure for looking at a whole series of ideas and perspectives." The exquisite water never stops running. ■

1. Patrick Mahon, "Exquisite Corpse Water Drawings," 2013. L to R: Chris Down, ink; Ben Reeves, ink and acrylic medium; Patrick Mahon, rubber stamped ink on basswood sticks; Colette Urban, watercolour and confetti cut from magazines. All works 18 x 12 inches on handmade flax paper. All images courtesy the artists.