

Joannie Boulais

Artist Statement

My sculptural work emerges from the feeling that the heterosexist norm prevails, pushing some to dissimulate their sexual orientation, despite legal advances and further declared openness toward a diversity of gender expressions. My working style, as an accumulation of small gestures, implies that every action influences the next one. I first collect objects from popular culture in which gender representation and social roles allocated to both sexes vary little: children's toys (plushies, action figures), tourist souvenirs (trinkets, postcards), movie and sport team consumer products, and mainstream books (best sellers, dictionaries). I then intervene on these objects to alter their meaning, often covering them with matter to hide some parts, while at the same time revealing other aspects. In my sculpture-assemblies – unlikely combinations of images, words, materials and matter –, I attempt to represent a plurality of identities, and to modify the symbolic charge of objects. In doing so, I hope to stir up a mix of curiosity, fascination, and discomfort in the observer.

Bio

During my Master's, I deciphered the hybridity present in my sculptures and in my installations by drawing parallels between plastic hybridity and identity hybridity. As a recipient of SSHRC (2014-2015) and FRQSC (2015-2016) scholarships, I was able to acquire a variety of materials, from Lego figures to animal pelts. Before my Master's, among other things, I took part in a group exhibition curated by Cynthia Girard at La Centrale (2014), completed a project with the Franco-Manitoban community in Saint-Boniface thanks to a bursary from CALQ (2013), did two artist residencies overseas in Spain and in Argentina (2012), and presented two solo exhibitions at (now defunct) Galerie de Matane and Territoires (2011). While waiting for my Master's Degree, I live, study, and entertain myself in Montreal.