

Nicolas Fleming

# Tableau

Text by Clara Puton



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Nicolas Fleming's *Tableau* moves through Forest City Gallery like a ground-swell. Fragments of plywood, objects, and clothing emerge from a painting made of plaster, its center dug out like a well, spilling forth a multi-layered and dense work that is simultaneously being created and subsumed by an accumulation of material.

Fleming is dedicated to creating installations only with reused material as much as possible. In *Tableau*, sculptures and paintings once found in other exhibitions are renewed and altered into a new form. Clothes, having grown musty in unopened drawers, are tossed into the mix, alongside defunct electronics, broken down crates, drywall, and other "leftovers" from past installations.

All these objects, taken up from Fleming's immediate surroundings, arrived at Forest City Gallery when he did. Though Fleming could evaluate material considerations and aesthetic restrictions in advance, the arrangement that constitutes *Tableau* forged its path across the gallery in a spontaneous fashion, a process dictated by a restriction of material and time. Its final shape—as the viewer sees it—completed within the length of install and what Fleming could accomplish within it.

In that regard, *Tableau* could be considered a performance. When he is in it, Fleming sees the gallery as "a studio," a space in which he is building a sculpture, its form affected by conditions of time, artistic and physical energy, as well as materials. Fleming stages his installation, exits the gallery, and leaves the work to become immediately accessible by a public audience.

The performance of *Tableau* is a solo act, an unusual one for Fleming who typically works with collaborators. The personal nature of the exhibition finds its way into the materials of the installation, in particular clothing and shoes that Fleming wore or purchased in multiples, remaining completely unused, before the pandemic suspended their need and relegated them into a state of stasis. Additionally, in *Tableau*, Fleming is mining the resources of his artistic archive, recognizing them for what they are — raw materials that can be transformed again and again in a continuous cycle of renewal.

Fleming does not feel attachment to past work and always considers it available to alteration. Yet it accumulates. Is the hole in the painting of *Tableau* a well-spring of creativity? His prior works spilling forth anew while demonstrating the potential of a reusable approach. Or is it a tidal wave that warns of how things build up and build up in consumer society, alerting us to the ways materialism is capable of flooding our lives? In *Tableau*, the possibilities overflow.







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Nicolas Fleming's cross-disciplinary artistic practice spans over 15 years. He completed an MFA in Visual and Media Arts at Université du Québec à Montréal in 2007. Since 2006, Fleming has presented numerous solo exhibitions across Quebec, notably at UQAM Gallery, McClure Gallery, AXENÉO7, Galerie Trois Points, L'Oeil de poisson, Maison des Arts de Laval, Centre CLARK, Centre Plein sud, as well as at ISE Cultural Foundation (New York, NY) and Harcourt House (Edmonton, AB). He attended artistic residencies in 2017 at Rupert (Vilnius, Lithuania) and in 2018 at Sculpture Space (Utica, NY). Since 2018, Fleming has been blurring the definitions of artist, art installer, art director and curator and contributed in putting together projects resulting group shows at Evans Contemporary (Peterborough), Koffler Centre for the Arts (Toronto), Art Gallery of Burlington (Burlington) and Musée d'art de Joliette (Joliette).

