

METRO PICTURES

Mackie, Amy. "Review: Camille Henrot," *ArtIn.Americamagazine.com* (April 17, 2014).

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Camille Henrot: Cappuccino, 2013, flat-screen monitor, tablet, videos and mixed mediums, 50¼ by 42½ by 14 inches; at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

“Cities of Ys,” organized by Miranda Lash at the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA), was Camille Henrot’s first solo exhibition in the United States. Henrot, who hails from Brittany, was the recipient last year of the Silver Lion award at the 55th Venice Biennale, for her video *Grosse Fatigue* (2013), in which she ostensibly catalogues the universe. At NOMA, she turned to the history and culture of the Houma tribe of southern Louisiana. Henrot drew parallels between the fishing towns of the Gulf coast and those of Brittany, whose mythical city Ys is referenced in the exhibition’s title.

After two years of research and considerable time spent with members of the United Houma Nation, Henrot created a series of documentary-style videos that were presented on flat-screen monitors. The 10 videos, collectively titled “Plasma Plasmas Stealth,” were distributed within seven mixed-medium installations (all works 2013). The installations explore various facets of Houma history and culture, but are concerned mainly with the fact that the Houma have not been recognized as a tribe by the United States government. In places, video screens are partially obscured by wooden cutouts left over from making guitars or adorned with drawings inspired by artists such as Joan Miró and Paul Klee; the video in the installation *Cities of Ys* is accompanied by a stack of papers excerpting an 1839 compilation of traditional Breton folk songs.

The installation *Cappuccino* relays the sad truth about the plight of the 17,000 people who make up the Houma tribe. In one-on-one interviews, and through voiceovers, they explain the double discrimination they have faced. The Houma people, who are acknowledged by the state of Louisiana as a tribe, were not allowed to attend public school in the state’s Terrebonne Parish, the swampy region where most of them live, until 1966. And they have not been federally recognized due to both intermarriage and the fractured bayous that displace and divide them. A print of the Wikipedia page for “cappuccino” is hung below the plasma screen, inviting, according to Lash, “discussion as to how archetypal images are created in the twenty-first century.” In this case, a beverage named after the color of Capuchin friars’ habits is now consumed internationally. Nearby, an iPad presents a video of a drop of water falling and rippling into a pool.

A *Global Enterprise* stands as a more singular installation, with 13 hinged panels (two of them flat-screen monitors playing videos) recalling poster displays or the Cover Flow interface on a Macintosh computer. The videos, shot in Terrebonne Parish, are juxtaposed with posters of previous NOMA exhibitions to draw attention to various forms of cultural translation. A photograph of Marlon Brando pinned to a sheet of cork alludes to Brando’s rejection of his 1973 Oscar as a gesture of support for the American Indian Movement.

The ambitiously layered exhibition also included a suite of silkscreen prints, a sculpture inspired by a traditional Acadian canoe and a woodcut titled *Submersion of Ys*. This print brought us full circle to the stories of Ys that Henrot heard as a child. According to Breton legend, the sea eventually swallowed the city. This fate, which is not an unlikely one for the Gulf Coast, serves as a metaphor for the people of the Houma Nation. Drowning in bureaucratic paperwork and other obstacles for decades, they continue to strive for federal recognition.