

Dreaming

visual arts | by Denis Gautier

Just as dreams are the mind's piecing together of the day's events and experiences, the two artists whose work is on display at Presentation House Gallery from February 24 to April 8 piece together their own response to popular dream imagery.

Grete Stern's *Sueños* ("Dreams" in Spanish) is a suite of 49 photomontages originally produced to illustrate a series of articles in the popular Argentine women's magazine *Idilio* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This regular feature was called "Psychoanalysis Will Help You," and in it a renowned Argentine psychiatrist provided interpretation for dreams submitted by the magazine's readers. This afforded Stern an opportunity to apply the photomontage process she had worked with in Germany as a student while at the famous Bauhaus School. In addition, by working with dreams women submitted, Stern had occasion to address the injustices of traditional gender roles being played out in the local culture. Stern brought a classically surrealist sensibility to this Argentinean, commercial work—a serious exploration of the unconscious presented in the context of the popular press.

In Your Dreams is an installation by Montreal artist Gisele Amantea consisting of 31 tiny globes—echoing the ever-present souvenir store "snow domes"—each containing tiny video projections that seem to float before the eyes. Movie moments play on the screens, from Fellini's *La Strada* and Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* to *King Kong* and *The Best of Betty Boop*, as do images of twirling ballerinas and ceramic figurines. The video sequences reveal a study of desire, love, despair, and the fantasy-laden ways in which women have been represented in popular culture.

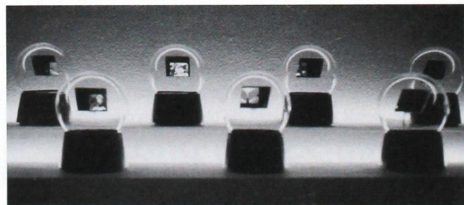
"The final montage creates a more complex world dominated by scenes of rising or falling curtains and fantastic landscapes where nature is mixed with artifice. Such is the world of women; an irrational and elusive stage set where the moon and its mysteries are omnipresent, and where it's often raining. The heroines, in any case, are either supernatural, like the 50-foot woman pulling out the electrical pole ... or they appear artificial, made-up—like lunar mimes. Between masks, their true nature remains elusive, just out of reach," writes Stéphane Aquin of the Montreal Museum of Fine Art.

Sueños and *In Your Dreams* will be on view at Presentation House Gallery to April 8.

A public lecture by Sylvia Coppola, daughter of Grete Stern, from Buenos Aires will take place in the gallery on Thursday, March 22, at 7:30 pm



GERMAN ARTIST GRETE STERN (1904–1999) WORKED IN GERMANY, ENGLAND, AND ARGENTINA AND WAS A PARTNER IN THE PHOTO STUDIO RINGL + PIT IN BERLIN (WITH ELLEN AUERBACH). SHE WAS AN EXILE OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC, LIVING IN ARGENTINA FROM 1933 UNTIL HER DEATH IN 2000.



SINCE THE LATE 1970S, GISELE AMANTEA HAS BEEN CREATING EXQUISITE INSTALLATIONS THAT EXPLORE KITSCH, NOSTALGIA, FEMININITY, AND MATERIALITY. HER WORK HAS BEEN EXHIBITED ACROSS CANADA AND INTERNATIONALLY.