

CY-THEA SAND

Curious Artifact

On viewing Thérèse Joyce-Gagnon's *Les demoiselles de Banff* (*The Girls of Banff*) (1990), acrylic on canvas, 240.0 x 230.0 cm

i meet you again with *The Girls of Banff*
you sit (while the others stand)
sport sunglasses a Mohawk
revision that lusty Spaniard
Stein loved so much

instead of Picasso's brothel I see a studio
a collective of women
(daughters for Alice and Gertrude)
etching desire
time alone
to paint
to write
to act up

you and your sisters
are not to be perceived as sexual objects
like the *Young Ladies of Avignon*
(oppressive and imprisoned Stein said)

the ironic image you inhabit suggests that
you own your own body and destiny
yet i recall i re/member
you refused me mine

your oppositional gaze
critiqued my open thighs
gnawed at my surface
adjusted my flesh to rules of perspectus
intuited a layer
sensitive to bright light

long ago in my wild coming out West

you framed me
for erotic crimes
you longed to enact
with me or against me
(i never learned which)

before the 80s sex wars
before five women in a studio
could be clad mainly in black
stretching tradition across paint brushes
sketch books naked feet

before a huge painting
tucks you away from public
view
in a storage vault outside
Montreal
where you wait for green
like the rest of us

shall we make up?
once for all to read?
shall we become lovers in verse?
let us make-believe: let us make
spring:

i am long legged with thick
black hair
an ebony locks, a *cinderella*
the only open mouth on the
canvas lips slightly apart
tongue waiting
my elbows reach for a curtain
sky
aqua marine backgrounds my
moss green velvet
slip of a dress
veiled in tulle starched
sturdy feet covered—unlike
Clara, Kris or Candice —
i am boldly femme a delight to
myself
a performer in Banff and with
you in bed
this morning

because of my boots I am tallest
because of my boots I draw you
because of my boots
you can look no where else
i command you
i demand that you
squeeze my thigh a breath from
your painterly hand
go ahead
caress my skin
across decades
convince me
we have traveled
this far

Cy-Thea Sand works at the McGill Centre for Research and Teaching and serves on McGill's Queer Equity Committee.