

Arranging Constance Spry

Digital prints & vase, 2013.

Leisure (Meredith Carruthers and Susannah Wesley)

07/2013

For the installation *Arranging Constance Spry*, Leisure considers the choreography behind Constance Spry's floral arrangements, highlighting the improvisational gestures and supporting objects behind her brazen floral displays.

Alongside this project Leisure performed a lecture at Concordia University entitled, *Flowers are for Everyone*, discussing the idea of still life as a frozen set of actions - a choreography that occurs behind the scenes, leaving behind the material trace of a display.

In 1926 society florist Constance Spry caused a "sensation" with her arrangement of collard greens, weeds and seed pods for the shop windows of Atkinsons, Bond Street perfumery.

In this spirit Spry worked to democratize aesthetics and liberate creative individual expression in the home. Alongside her more flashy society commissions (such as whitewashed greens for the infamous all white drawing room of decorator Syrie Maugham), she encouraged the British public to decorate their homes with flowers through texts such as "Millionaire for a Sixpence", and adorned aristocratic houses with bouquets of kale, rhubarb leaves, poppies and peas, nestled into kitchenware vessels scrounged from the depths of client cupboards. Inspired by the sumptuousness of 17th century Dutch floral still-life painting, but devoted to working site- specifically, Spry's arrangements contained a daring contrast of luxuriance and the quotidian, whimsy, perversity and peculiarity, making her work truly avant-garde within its time.

Spry's revolutionary legacy in floral decoration has, however, drawn contention. In 2004 board members of London's Design Museum – Terence Conran and James Dyson – threatened to resign over an exhibition of Spry's work. For Conran and Dyson, the inclusion of Spry in the design canon was a triumph of "high society mimsi-ness" and style over substance. More than fifty years after her death, the arranging hand of Constance Spry is more controversial than ever, and floral arts - often aligned with the feminine - continue to be disputed as a worthy subject in the western world of design.

Installation views at La Vitrine, Montreal. July-August, 2013. Photos: Lorna Bauer

LA VITRINE
Atelier Daigneault | Schofield



2126, rue Rachel Est Montréal Qc. H2H 1P9

stephenmbschofield@gmail.com





