

» TORONTO STAR «

Young & Giroux cage their Tangerine Panther

Also at the galleries, Iris Haussler becomes Sophie La Rosière at Daniel Faria.



The Sophie La Rosière Project (SLR-250, 1906), 2016 From Iris Häussler: The Sophie La Rosière Project – Chapter III, (COURTESY DANIEL FARIA GALLERY)

By [MURRAY WHYTE](#) Visual arts
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Ongoing

Daniel Young & Christian Giroux: Tangerine Panther: For a duo whose likely best known work is called *Infrastructure Canada*, [a hypnotic, meditative film piece now owned by the National Gallery of Canada about, well,](#)

[infrastructure in Canada](#), *Tangerine Panther* seems a little off key. Grabby titles have rarely been their thing (see: *50 Light Fixtures from Home Depot*, another counterintuitively compelling film work), so why the turnaround? Consider, perhaps, the context. Tucked into 8-11, a tight window-box gallery on a strip of Spadina Ave. in Chinatown that increasingly feels like the city's last bastion of un-condoized urbanity, the machismo bluster makes a little more sense.

The works, a pair of slickly made structures composed of cubes of coloured acrylic panels and industrial steel shelving, read almost as tawdry fantasies of cookie-cutter development run amok; the high-modern forms of Mies van der Rohe, say, reimagined as porn. (see: almost [anything by Peter Freed](#)). As sculptors, Young & Giroux have always been drawn to the quiet esthetics of banal and workaday things. Classic pieces have neatly cleaved Ikea dressers into sharp sculptural forms, or twisted silvery HVAC ductwork into beguiling pretzels with neither beginning or end.

They've also been keen observers of urbanity and how a workaday anti-esthetic has shaped our cities to a point, at best, of suffocating blandness. (Another of their Cineplex-unfriendly films, their first, put a fine point on it: *Every Building in Toronto, or Site, that a Building Permit Has Been Issued for a New Building in Toronto in 2006*. Seriously.) With *Tangerine Panther*, the time for such arm's length observation is past. Here, in a glass-box gallery pinned to the crumbling facade of a careworn Victorian, Young & Giroux call out our city's haphazard development for what it is: tawdry, gleefully crass, predatory and ever-stalking.

- [At 8-11 Gallery, 233 Spadina Ave.](#) , until March 29.

Iris Haussler, The Sophie La Rosière Project, Chapter III: For years, Iris Haussler didn't really have to contemplate what she might do for an encore because every exhibition she made was her last. It was the way it had to be. Haussler, who elevated subterfuge to high art, would slip into a new skin for each outing, crafting entire realities for her various surrogates to inhabit: [Joseph Wagenbach](#), an addled, elderly German immigrant, whose tiny house in Trinity Bellwoods he filled with wax-effigy horrors; or Mary O'Shea, the teenage Irish house maid who in the 19th century [filled the walls of the Art Gallery of Ontario's Grange](#) with tiny objects — cries for help, across the ages.

[Sophie La Rosière was born of Haussler's vivid imagination too](#), but she's sticking around, maybe because she's a little different. In the past, Haussler would vanish completely, taking any notion of artifice along with her. So complete were her deceptions, for all any of her viewers could tell what they were seeing was real: remnants of real lives lived, actual traumas endured. The intention was to impart emotion, not knowledge. It's very different, as she always said, to know something than it is to feel it and, unless you had a heart of stone, trust me, you felt it.

From the beginning, Sophie's role was less an open wound than a narrative vehicle for some bigger ideas: about art, gender, and the marginal space occupied by women in the really big deal of Modernism. For a movement predicated on newness, the old boys' club Modernism became looked pretty same old, same old. Sophie, a gifted painter able to move deftly across Modern movements — painterly, intricately woven textures à la Klimt, the thick and messy exuberance of Matisse — become tangled in frustration and heartsickness both (the object of her affection, a woman, represented another socio-cultural boundary not to be crossed), moving her to destroy her works and abandon her studio in the French countryside, never to return.

Or so the story goes. [The Art Gallery of York University recreated Sophie's abandoned studio last year](#), where Haussler emerged from the shadows as author, not puppet-master behind the scenes; simultaneously downtown, [Scrap Metal Gallery](#) hosted a full-on forensic of Sophie's oeuvre, complete with x-ray scrutiny of the works she defaced in her emotional collapse.

With the work recovered, the research done and the dust settled, the art world does what the art world does: it makes a tidy show of the work itself, which at Daniel Faria Gallery is a beguiling, dizzyingly visceral (and more than occasionally naughty) thing.

Haussler, a sculptor and conceptual artist, had to submerge more deeply into Sophie than any of her previous avatars. She had to teach herself to paint to become Sophie and, to pull it off (Sophie's story presents her as likely the first-ever Modern female painter), she had to get very good at it and I'm convinced. The paintings are technically accomplished but emotionally charged, fully realized and assured. It's her best trick yet: a possession so complete there's no way of knowing where Haussler ends and Sophie begins. Haussler is no longer the great deceiver pulling the wool over our eyes; she's one of us.

- At [Daniel Faria Gallery](#), 188 St. Helens Ave., to April 29.

-Whyte, Murray. "Young and Giroux cage their Tangerine Panter," Toronto Star, March 23, 2017