

# Dominique Norville – Observe the Stars

## Visual Description

This exhibit is of 8 collages by Dominique Norville. I will describe 5 of the works, which are all 11 inches by 14 inches, but with the matting and framing they are larger (16 inches by 20 inches). They are arranged on large, freestanding gallery panels covered in a beige carpet-like material. There are four double sided panels, stacked in a line, running north-south. The panel faces also point north-south. The panels are numbered 1 through 8, with 1 being the northernmost panel, 2 being the south facing panel on the rear side of panel 1, and so on, through panel 8 being the southernmost panel.

Dominique says of her work:

This series arose from a time of deep introspection through the dark months of Covid winter. My goal was to reconsider some long held childhood memories, as well as long running dreams and nightmares, which had actually morphed into a kind of memory. Many of the pieces in this series express memory in the form of the cityscape. For me the cityscape acts as a metaphor of the internal world. My parents' experience in WW2 reinforced to me what is almost a mythmaking process, about geographical origins. They had to experience multiple displacements, after cities were bombed, or the country where they were born, disappeared. These traumatic events create difficult memories. Misremembered cityscapes can create new memories. In this way collage is the perfect technique, as it can portray multiple time frames and places existing on the same plane. This technique of seamlessly connecting fragments strongly corresponds with the idea of false memory or reconstructed reality present in my work. I have been encouraged by this process of reconsideration, to allow myself to be absolved of bad memory, as well as bad dreams. Many of the works in this series also incorporate scrap pieces of my own art work, as well as repeated use of personal imagery, such as the Vancouver Block office building in downtown Vancouver, where my father worked for many years.

### **Panel 1 – Tea Cup**

On the lower left side of the piece is a large cup or bowl, in what appears to be metal. This vessel has a bronze tone, and the bottom flares out in a kind of stand. The left hand edge of the cup is cut off by the edge of the image. Inside the cup are photos of many different buildings and structures from different places and in different tones (black and white, colour, sepia), sizes, and perspectives. All the buildings point upwards, but are arranged to be overlapping each other. The buildings might be recognizable to some, but they are not iconic. There are some office buildings, houses, and public buildings. One recognizable structure is a Ferris wheel which is at the top left of the cup. At the top right of the cup is a large tower with a clock face on its side pointing to just past 4:00. The tip of the tower is the high point of the image. Just to the left of the tall tower is a swirl of steam such as might rise from a cup of tea.

### **Panel 2, on the left – Tsunami**

The final image is a multiple stacked view of a landscape. In the foreground at the bottom of the image, is a large body of water with some still areas and some areas of disturbance. The water has a variety of colours with deep blue in the front, some reflected pink sky in the middle, and some dark shadows of trees near the top. From the bottom right corner, curving up and over the water, is an ornate staircase with gold bannisters and stone steps. The staircase leads the eye to the middle of the picture which shows a dark green line of dense trees lining the edge of the water. Behind the trees is a thin strip featuring some pale houses and a snow covered mountain over on the left hand side. Above this line of houses, is another image, of some small apartment buildings with a bruise-coloured, cloudy sky behind. Another white and grey cloud has been added on top of the sky and extends just beyond the left hand side of the frame. This image of apartment buildings has some white creases and wear marks on it which look like pock marks on the buildings or snow falling from the superimposed cloud. The apartment buildings have a slightly rosy glow as if from a sunset.

### **Panel 3, on the left – Things You Have Torn Down**

The third image is a collage with mostly black and white photographic images. In the background is what appears to be the skirt of a dress in a white, shiny fabric, reminiscent of a wedding dress or a dress for a fancy event. There are some large, grey stitches on the white skirt, running vertically at regular intervals. Sitting right at the waist of the dress is superimposed a black and white photograph of a streetscape with old buildings. It stretches from the nearest point on the left where there is quite a bit of detail visible (people walking on the sidewalk, white awnings over windows, streetlamps, etc.) wrapping around to the right where the buildings become indistinct. The skyline of the streetscape is cut out and behind it is a geometric shape of dark grey which is straight across the top and dips down to a point on the right. Sitting behind the streetscape and the grey background is a piece which is cut in the shape of what might be the rough outline of the left hand of the person wearing the dress. It comes down the right side of the dress and crosses over the front, the 'hand' ending part way down the skirt. The 'arm' part has an image of a cut rose with green leaves and very light pink petals on a sepia background. Behind the rose appears to be a very small image of someone poling a barge with 1 or 2 cows on it. On the 'hand' which extends below the streetscape, is a photograph of a young woman with dark hair pulled back and wearing a dark collared shirt buttoned up. She has white patterned oven mitts on her hands. She is covering her right eye with her right hand and is looking away to her left.

### **Panel 6 (on the left) – I Put My Hands On Your Back**

The image also sits in the bottom left corner of the frame, with empty space in the upper right. The main image appears to be a photograph of a white bird body (what is known as a bird skin in natural history collections) with a light yellow beak pointing up toward the top of the frame. There are some dark grey markings on the bird, but there are no wings visible. Over the bird is a semi-transparent image of some feathers with visible barbs. Just beside the bird's head is a white wing extended with a grey tip, in a scientific illustration style. Each feather is visible on the wing. Just above the bird's head and also in the bottom right are some black, white and grey line-drawings that evoke flowers, but are also reminiscent of the coils of a slinky.

**Panel 8 – High Tide, framed with a second dark blue mat, framed size is 18 inches by 24 inches**

The fourth image is in portrait orientation and is, on first glance, a standard landscape of an urban park and waterway with a building in the background, in black and white photographic detail. The details are somewhat surreal, however. On the left hand side is the silhouette of some trees, a path, and a retaining wall that sticks out in a point into the waterway. The water fills most of the front of the image and flows up and to the right, in front of a large official-looking building which sits across the middle of the image. Behind the building are two spires or towers, one rounded (on the left) and a taller pointed one (just to the right of the rounded one). In the waterway are two groups of three grazing horses. A small patch of grass is under the feet of both groups of horses. Most of the horses are white with one black one. All of the above described images are black and white and grey and are not crisply focused, with the exception of the foreground waterway which has a pink tone. By contrast, the sky has some colour and is more distinct. It appears to be a superimposed curved ceiling with rococo swirls and shapes, with gold highlights. The curvature gives the sky a feeling of containing or hugging the images below. The details of the 'ceiling' also act as frames to some images that may be old paintings, and although the contents of those smaller images are not very clear, they do have a bit of colour. Rising from the top of the official-looking building in the background is a gold figure, possibly an angel, with a book in an outstretched hand.