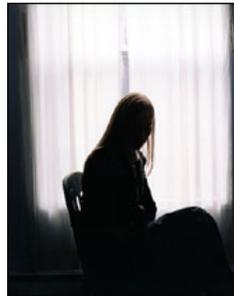


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**Marisa Portolese is Breathless: Inhaling deep**

by Isa Tousignant – February 8, 2007

*Eclipse*, by Portolese

*Marisa Portolese catches her breath to bring us more visions of beauty*

Marisa Portolese is back! After a longer break than we're used to between her seductive series of work, the Montreal photographer follows up on the success of the lyrical *The Recognitions* with the much more ethereal *Breathless*. On at the Belgo's Galerie Trois Points until Feb. 10, *Breathless* is a study in contemplation.

"It's much more personal work," confesses the artist. The exhibition unites eight works – four singular photographs and two diptychs – featuring women beguiled by anonymous, unexplained emotions.

"I wanted to play with the idea of photographing someone between states – it could be euphoric, it could be ecstatic," explains Portolese. "You know how at night things get kind of twisted in your mind? You go to bed and get up in the morning and it's a whole other thought – well, I didn't want to ignore that experience or the thoughts that go through my mind in those times."

The break Portolese took after 2005's *The Recognitions* was spent thinking. Though for most artists two years is nothing in terms of production period, for the prolific, highly charged Portolese, it was a change of gears.

"It took me a long time to take the photographs that are up. For instance, [*Eclipse*] I thought about for a year before I did it. It was in my head, I wanted to do a silhouette. I was looking at a lot of Victorian painting all the time, like John Rodham Spencer, and how they were inspired by what was going on around them. That was the state I was in: in a very contemplative state, thinking of experiences and things without knowing how to translate those ideas visually."

For the first time ever, Portolese has incorporated unpeopled landscapes in this exhibition, a very interesting development. Though she has always demonstrated a distinct interest in the tradition of landscape art (whether in the history of painting or photography), she's usually always hooked it onto portraiture. Here, *White Hart* pictures a deer on a lawn, while *Dawn*, a vase of flowers, and the judiciously titled *Midnight Sky* forms half of the two diptychs in the show, hung alongside close shots of women in faraway thoughts.

"I incorporated still life alongside these portraits sort of as breaking points," explains Portolese. "You're dealing with these intense portraits, and you need a space to think about what you just saw."

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Which is, mostly, other people thinking about something of their own. Nothing quite encourages musing like the sight of someone else musing – this is the insight Portolese brings us so beautifully.

**Breathless**

At Galerie Trois Points (372 Ste-Catherine W., suite 520), to Feb. 10

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