

Jacinthe Robillard. l'étendue de mes connaissances

An image of you

| Anne-Marie Proulx

| Edited by Craig Rodmore

Maybe you have known her all your life. You may once have lived in the same house. Or was it the one next door—almost the same one. Perhaps you have known each other so long that you no longer remember when you met. If you do not speak as often as you would like, you know that every long silence comes to an end. Do you know everything about each other? Or do you know almost nothing of she who sits at the same table as you at the family dinner every other year? It could also be that you met her only later, at work or at university. By mere coincidence, you found yourselves in the same place, and before you knew it she had become a dear friend. Or else you don't know her very well at all, but you appreciate the smile she gives you whenever you cross paths. The last time you saw her could have been a few days or several years ago.

You are one of the people she arranged appointments with, simply because she wanted to. For that, she found a pretext: something for you to execute, a task neither simple nor complicated, difficult but not impossible. You are all invited to the same place, but never at the same time, because she wants to see each one of you alone. And so you meet her at the appointed time, or maybe you're a little late, as usual.

You are invited to sit in front of a board of instructions. Before commencing, you take the time to ponder over the task—a little shyly, your back slightly curved. You don't yet dare put your elbows on the table; you won't do it until you feel ready to start. Or maybe you have, on the contrary, already placed your hands flat on the table, or planted them on your thighs as you bend forward to show that you are ready to meet the challenge. Your cheek, your chin, or your neck finds a place in the hollow of your hand, supporting your head for the time of reflection. Or you join your hands together, palm against palm, in front of your face, in such a way that your forefingers lightly lift up the tip of your nose. Did you know that you do that?

Also, you tilt your head forward a little, and you look straight ahead; you are determined. Your brow furrowed, you seem perplexed. You often raise your eyes to the ceiling—does that help you to think better, to better visualize the enigma that is to be resolved? When you stare at a corner of the room, you don't exactly look at it; absorbed

in your thoughts, vision is not necessary. At a certain point, you look directly into the lens. You have not forgotten that you are observed, nor has it been hidden from you.

But in the performance of the task, you have almost forgotten about it. You are focused, and least concerned with the gaze cast upon you. What counts most is to progress, even when it is difficult. So you bite your lip gently. You grumble a little. You roll your eyes. You scratch your head. You push your glasses up your nose with the tip of your finger. You give a little nervous laugh. You make fun of your repeated failures, yes, but you always start over anyway. You sneer a little even when you succeed. All this time, she has been there, discreetly. If you found it difficult, she most likely offered you some help. If, on the contrary, you made it clear that you wanted to succeed by yourself, she did not intervene, and let you work quietly.

No matter the time nor the number of attempts and mistakes it took, you made it. That was it, nothing more. But you had to reach that point. If, at first, the task was a pretext for seeing you, it was also a pretext for getting you to see yourself, for reminding you that you are unique. And it is a photograph she took at a moment that you did not expect or notice, that will convince you. An image of you that you have never seen before.

Anne-Marie Proulx is an artist, author, and curator who lives in Quebec City. With a practice that integrates words and images, she instills poetry in the everyday and in the relics of memory. She holds an MA in Art History from Concordia University, where she also completed a BFA in Visual Arts that was begun at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. She has collaborated with the Centre des arts actuels Skol and regularly works on collective publication projects. Both her art and her research have been presented in Quebec, Canada, the United States, Portugal, and Cyprus. Anne-Marie Proulx is Artistic Director of VU, centre de diffusion et de production de la photographie. www.annemarieproulx.com

Jacinte Robillard uses multiple documentary formats of standard photography, video, and referent, to produce this complex portraiture series. The title of the project, *l'étendue de mes connaissances* (the scope of my knowledge/acquaintances), hints at the embodiment and sensorial nature of knowing, or rather, coming to know, that interests her. She has created a seemingly neutral environment and set out a define task complete with diagrammatic instructions for friends and family members to enter into. She documents them in the process of understanding the diagram and performing the task of folding an origami paper crane. The unique gestures, in posture, facial expression and subtle expressions of sound deliver on her search for signs of the individual revealed in a moment of solitude and the intimacy of watching someone learn.