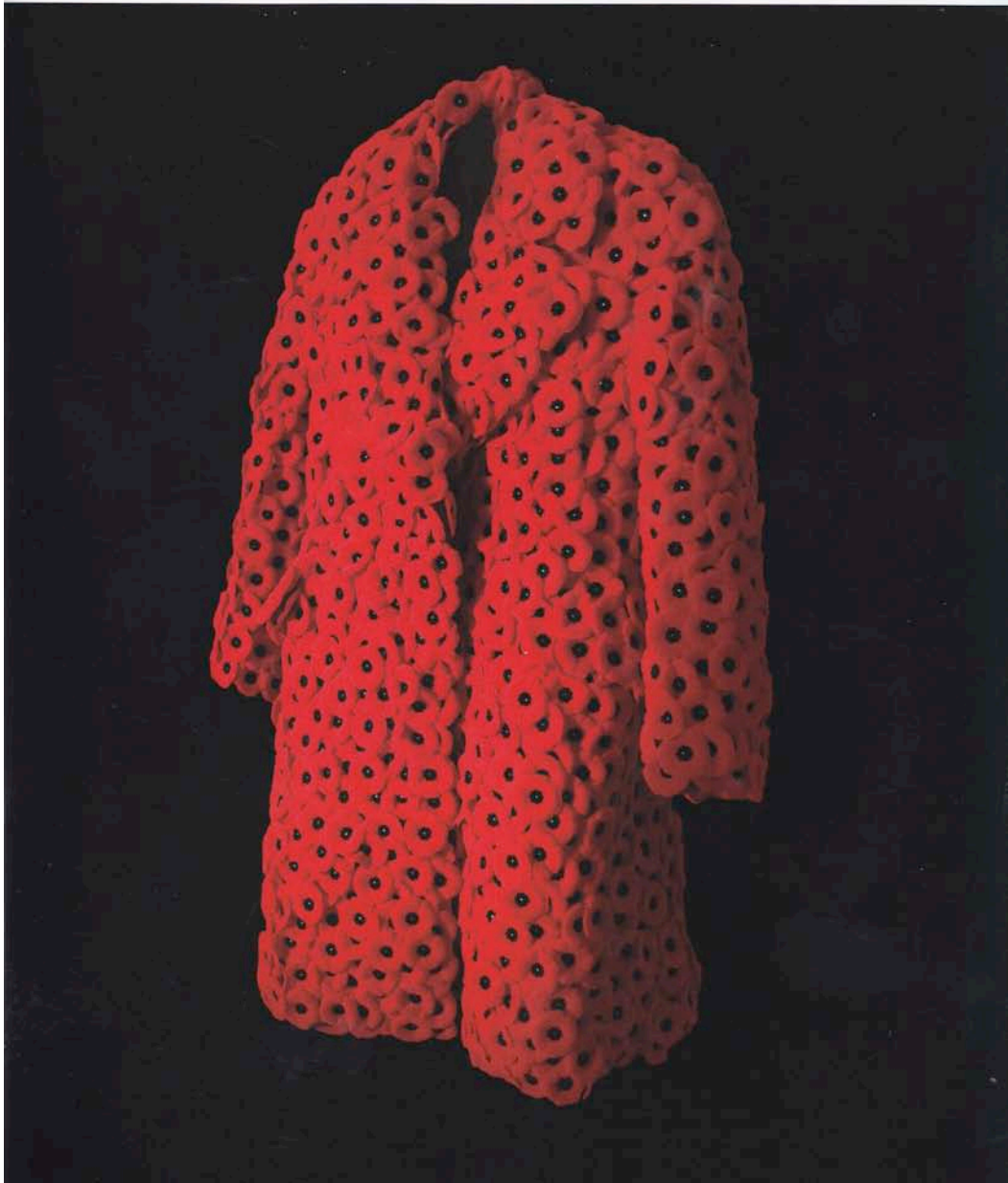


MAG

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Burman, Monika. "Coats and Futures Brokering," *MAG (Mass Art Guide)*, Cover & pp. 8-13, April 2011.

COATS AND FUTURES BROKERING

By Monika Burman

Revolution is the theme of 2011, so far. We've seen much of uprising, fighting and the rhetoric of rule, military, or democratic. Current events provide a serendipitous context in which to consider Toronto artist, Anitra Hamilton's, "The Future Has Been Decided", at Georgia Scherman Projects in Toronto.

The exhibition is made up of objects, collaged images, installation, and audio that thematically carries forward Hamilton's established investigation of military imagery, territorialism, and hierarchy. In addition, the new works introduce ideas of cultural appropriation; as the artist calls it, "hijacking other cultures", co-opting costumes, celebrations and traditions to uncover the nationalism that belies them.

In her "Turn Coat" series, Hamilton takes illustrations of military personnel in various uniforms and mismatches their tops and bottoms. The images are derived from illustrated uniform catalogues, detailing dress, and history from various wars and nations. "Turn Coat 2" has a comedy about it: a stern-faced soldier with arms crossed stares directly out at you, but with ridiculous harem-pant bottoms. The juxtaposition is an undressing of sorts, a way to break down the connotations of power, pride, and intimidation that are normally associated with military finery. Similarly awkward and odd combinations in the other "Turn Coat" images show irony and sarcasm, highlighting the pun on the word "turncoat".

Hamilton's "Red Coat" is a piece where the actual object of war, a Canadian Military Great Coat, is encrusted with a symbol of war remembrance, the enduring poppy. By covering up the military coat with the poppy, Hamilton draws attention to the euphemism that obscures the negative derivation of it: the lovely flower as a cover for war.

"Red Coat" is accompanied by an audio recording, titled "Two Minutes of Silence", which was recorded during a Remembrance Day ceremony. The silence is bracketed by chiming bells at the start and bombers at the end. Providing this additional sensory stimulation, taken out of its natural context, asks viewers to approach these cultural cues with skepticism.

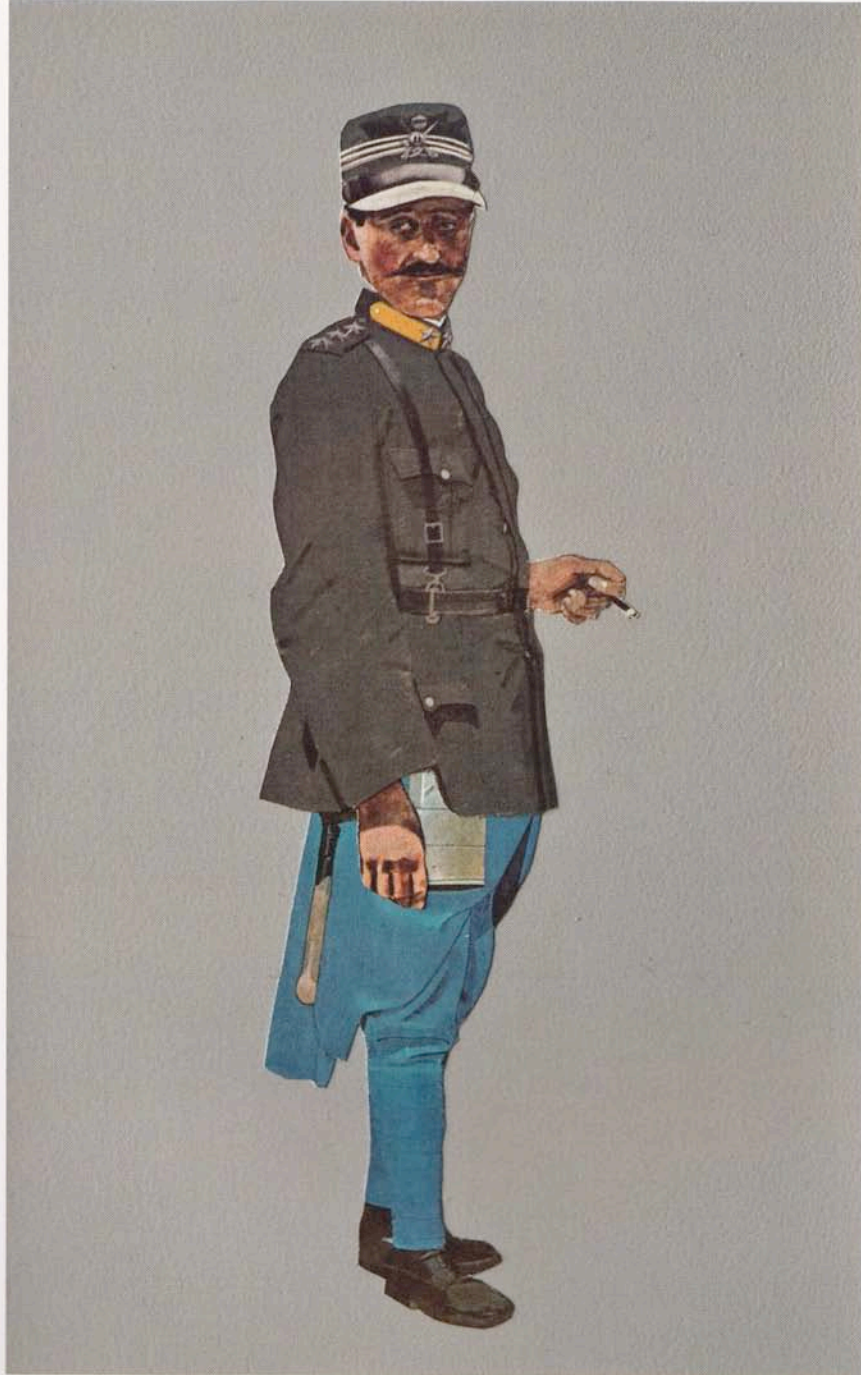
Further to the thought of skepticism is the title of this exhibition (also a text-based work in the show). "The Future Has Been Decided" is a decidedly determined phrase, an imperative that is both foreboding and foreshadowing. The artist explained that it is a comment on a society stalled, with an uncertain outcome, but an outcome nonetheless. Hamilton's impulse comes from "a rational skepticism", that she hopes "(optimistically) encourage[s] a transformation of thinking".

So maybe it's not revolution in 2011, but transformation.

The Future Has Been Decided by Anitra Hamilton, Through April 23rd, 2011. Georgia Scherman Projects, 133 Tecumseth Street, Toronto, www.georgiascherman.com

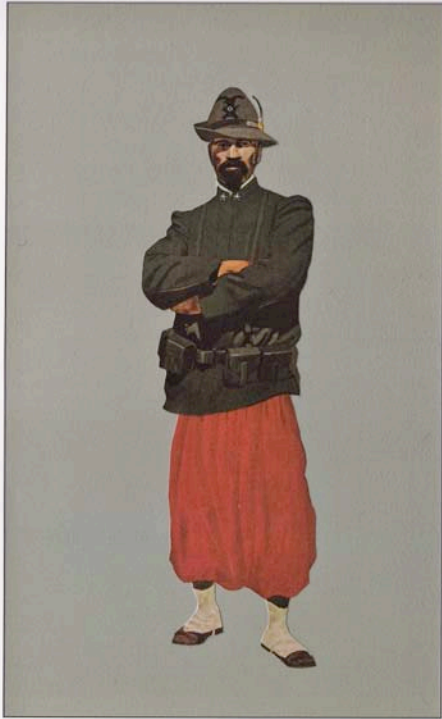
Cover: Anitra Hamilton, Red Coat, 2010-11, Canadian Military Great Coat with 3000 Remembrance Day poppies. Image courtesy of Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto. Page 9-13, Anitra Hamilton, Turncoat, 2011, MDF and cut-outs from military illustration books. Image courtesy of Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.

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