



Michael A. Robinson's albino organ looks like it fell down the rabbit hole before us and got lodged in a curious diagonal fulcrum at the bottom. Painted in Robinson's trademark white, the instrument – and its architectural scaffolding – titled *Pastiche* (2005), gives rise to the specter of its own instrumental mimicry. The accompanying video, *No Life at All in the House of Dolls* (2005), with the artist himself all-too-ambulatory in white lab coat, carrying out strange pseudoscientific routines, including some nonsensical ones seated at the organ, suggests something like institutionalized insanity. The video and installation both suggest a mental whiteout, a sort of mental blizzard in which thinking itself loses any tidy and well-ordered or trackable linear coordinates. Even the traces of our own footprints are lost, as it were, in the snow this work brings down on our heads.

Robinson moves here beyond his characteristic "empathy boxes" into a postmodernist vignette redolent of an episode of the *Outer Limits* TV show, which leaves empathy far behind and invokes its opposite with surreal glamour and *Lost Highway*-like mischief (care of a Satanic Robert Blake in whiteface, perhaps). A brilliant metaphor for the artistic process in which the artist, moving ahead at haltering pace in a real cloud of unknowing, gets caught between all the hits and misses of his own process and transmits

the attendant frustration to his viewers like the Mad Hatter at his tea party.

Robinson's work in recent exhibitions at Pierre François Ouellette art contemporain and the Musée du Québec demonstrates that he is at the top of his form, and the new work in this exhibition eloquently confirms this. As the Mad Hatter in a lab coat, Robinson is peerless. Better yet, call him a mime artist on point in the whole wounded madhouse of our time, and he is hot in pursuit of "growing" his repertoire, for Robinson pushes the envelope way beyond the fail-safe point. Once again, he supplies an epiphany – with his own trademark, well-sharpened, knife-edge incision.