

## SIMON BELLEAU

By Jodi Schachowskoj

Simon Belleau is in his final year at Concordia University, studying in the BFA program and specializing in photography. In addition, he also does work with video, performance and a strong painting background. Belleau's influences come from various places - his childhood, religion, other artists and nature. His primary focus is the manipulation of images and the effects that can be achieved through the photographic medium. He prefers to alter, distort or "play with" the processes or subjects of his photographs, seeing the original image as a canvas, allowing for freedom of creation and development, with elements of performance as well.

His series *Pope Innocent X* is a direct homage to Velasquez and his work of the same name. He duplicated the portrait of Pope Innocent using a model and then manipulated the photographs using an external element - flour. The 8 minute video is the primary piece in this group, the photos an additional commentary. As the video progresses, the subject rotates; all the viewer can see are the white elements (cuffs, collar, and paper in hand). Flour slowly drops from above, revealing the figure as the "snow falls" on the body. Directly influenced by his own Catholic upbringing, Belleau uses this recognizable and iconic image of the Pope with a sense of the sacred, relating it to the spiritual aspects of photographs that he creates. His high regard for imagery and themes of the sacred, he uses the Velasquez portrait as a building block, retaining details such as the ring and the parchment containing the pope's signature (in Belleau's image, the signature is that of Velasquez). He uses universal ideas to show his view of the picturesque, the pope being the link between God and humans. It is an inspirational portrait, giving the viewer a glimpse at his ideals and allowing the audience to seek their own sublime.



Simon Belleau. *Pape Innocent X* (version 2) d'après Velazquez. 2010. Ink jet print. 40 x 50 inches.  
<<http://sbelleau.tumblr.com/>>.