SACKVILLE, NB

TROUT RIVER GULCH: PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THADDEUS HOLOWNIA

March 15th - April 1st, 2002
Fog Forest Gallery,
14 Bridge St., Sackville, N. B.
Tel.: 506-536-9000 / e-mail
gallery@nbnet.nb.ca

Thaddeus Holownia is mainly known for the photographs that he has taken around the Tantramar Marsh in New Brunswick. This is the place where he has lived and worked over the last twenty-five years. Holownia has, of course, taken photographs in Canada, the United States and Europe, but it has been those taken closest to home that come to mind when many people think of his work. The photographs in this exhibition are very different not only for where they were taken in Newfoundland, but also in their execution. These photographs were produced during a Gros Morne National Park Artist Residency, a program co-sponsored by Parks Canada and the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador. Holownia is the first photographer to have taken part in this residency. It has given him the opportunity to make several trips to Newfoundland to take photographs in the Gros Morne Park.

The twenty-four black and white photographs in this exhibition were taken along a sixteen kilometre stretch of road in the park between a place called Woody Point and Trout River, also known as Trout River Gulch. This is a desolate place, yet Holownia has been able to find great beauty there. Like many of his other photographs, these were taken with his custom built large format, 7 x 17 view camera and then printed as contact prints. Unlike most of Holownia's other large format pictures, many of these photographs have a narrow depth of field. The photographer is known for his images that have razor sharp focus from foreground to background. This results from using a very narrow, or small aperture such as f/6.3 or even f/28. The new narrow focus photos were taken with the lens wide open (f8) and using 305 and 450 mm lenses. This results in pictures where the depth of field can be measured in millimetres. A single section of a branch of a tree might be in sharp focus while the rest of the photograph will be in soft focus.

A majority of photographs in this exhibition are a sub-series that Holownia titles Tree Calligraphy. It is an apt title, as the trees in these photographs have been twisted into calligraphic-like forms by the harsh forces of nature in this lonely part of Newfoundland. There are photographs in this series that are taken in exactly the same place over a period of several months by this method. They reveal how different the same place can look in the summer and then winter.

All of the photographs in the exhibition are beautiful. This is not surprising, as beautiful is a quality common to all of Holownia's work. Indeed, some critics claim that Holownia's vision whitewashes the reality of nature and, in turn, of life itself. This is not a criticism that I would accept, as I believe beauty to be very important, if not central to art, but I also admit to being a romantic. Photography can be a difficult artform to criticize. A lot of people who own cameras think of themselves as photographers. In truth it takes a fair bit of vision, as well as a good grasp of technical knowledge to be a photographic artist. Holownia has both of these skill in spades.

The photographs in Trout River Gulch are flawless, but it is the artist's vision that makes them art. It is Holownia's ability to see beauty in places that others would pass by that makes the crucial difference. Even then there is more to taking a great picture than just finding the time and place and pushing a button. You need real skill to get it right. The exposure is one thing, and a real important thing it is, and the other is making a decent print. Holownia's prints are far more than decent. They are objects of beauty. Comparing the late American photographer Ansel Adams's photos of national parks with those Holownia made for this show in one of Canada's national parks - Gros Morne, Holownia does not fare badly. His prints are of a similar technical quality to Adams' and he also shares the American's love of photographing the natural landscape with a large format camera. Holownia is, however, different from Ansel Adams in that he will do a number of photographs on the same subject or place over a period of time. Three sets of series photographs: Headlighting, 1974-1977, Rockland Bridge, 1981-2000; and Julicare Pond, 1996-2001, were recently (September 28, 2001 – January 20, 2002) included in a major German exhibition at Hamburger Kunsthalle in Hamburg titled Monet's Legacy, Series-Order and Obsession. He was the only Canadian artist to be included in this important exhibition.

The Sackville exhibition is a prelude to a major exhibition that the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador are mounting in 2005 of the photographer's work. It will subsequently tour Canada after its Saint John's opening. Thaddeus Holownia is an artist whose work I have followed for a quarter of a century and during that time he has become a major artist whose work will endure. The works in Trout River Gulch are simply wonderful photographs.

Virgil Hammock

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Jean-Paul Riopelle

622 Richmond Street West, Toronto
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Fax: (416) 504-5446

Membre de l'Association Professionnelle des Galeries d'Art du Canada
Ron Levine’s photos of lifetime prisoners in North America’s prisons complete with accounts that form the basis of this book, are both revealing and upsetting, for they document a world of broken dreams, expectations, and sheer stupidity. As the Montreal-based photographer comments in the book’s preface: “In March 1996 I walked into a geriatric prison for the first time. I was expecting metal bars, tiny cells and hardened criminals ready to pounce from every dark crevice of the institution. What I found was not unlike a nursing home, but oddly juxtaposed with barbed wire and guard towers. There were men who required walkers, canes, wheelchairs, men attached to IV drips, oxygen tanks and catheters. My first thought was: ‘What can these men possibly do to harm anyone on the outside while in this condition.’”

The subject of an exhibition at the McClure Gallery of the Visual Arts Centre (Montreal: Synchronicity Productions, 2000)

The show consists of three large flash-on-masonite panel paintings, one small circular work (London), and a selection of collages integrating photos in the work. Citing Bill Vazan’s photographic reflections from the early 1970s, Alan Palement, and Escher as influences, Merrill’s paintings deftly defy gravity as they recreate sites and spaces of human habitation using 360 degree panoramic perspectives. He achieves this by rearranging the photographs into a schematic layering on the picture plane.

The show’s title, Pan-morpheous means both pan (denoting all) and morph (denoting form). So in a way these works can be considered fundamentally formalist. That said, they also work as potentially subversive representations of how mass culture can impose itself on the artist’s vision and the creative process. This exhibition ushered in a new distinctive episode in Merrill’s work. (Previous to this he used his own body as source material for painting on casts, extending his usual method of working by appropriating living environments as site.) This new work carried a cornucopia of traces that draw from his considerable legacy of artistic activity from the past. The resulting works arrive at an original voice.

In the painting Ottawa (Snowfall), a view from the Wellington bridge looking deep into the heart of the downtown district, Merrill achieves a technical mastery of the scenery, and there is a dynamic anarchy to the way he renders this scene with a panoramic 360 degree perspective. The poetic gravitational pull of the large descending snowflakes keep the painting from physically unsettling the viewer. These works are an extension of a series of similar works done while Merrill was in Paris for three months. Bringing exterior photographic documents back to his studio, Merrill set about using the reflective panorama to explore the potential of the photograph as a vehicle to discover new ways of representing space. Merrill considers this his own, over time, to be an ‘implied self portrait’ This work is self referential, even though it also explores sites in their entirety.

The work titled Studio, St. Henri is another fine example of Merrill’s mastery of composition. Taken from rearranged photographs of a studio in St. Henri, this vertiginous spiral

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collected and brought together from various times and places. Among her many accomplishments, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth co-authored "Insights, Discoveries, Stupors: Drawing From the Model" (McGill-Queens Press, 1995) with Rhoda Cohen, a book whose candid dialogue, photos of drawings, discoveries and insights which they shared a studio and drew together. The book communicates a lot about the artistic process in a very personal way, just as Ghitta Caiserman-Roth's art does, awakening dormant emotions and sensations with a strong sense of colour and feeling for the tenor of life.

John K. Grande

TORONTO

PETER DOIG: LANDSCAPES - CANADIAN STYLE?

December 8th, 2001 - March 3rd, 2002

The Power Plant
231 Queens Quay West,
Toronto, M5J 2S8
Tel: 416-973-4449

First, let's get over How Canadian is It? Sarah Milroy in the Globe and Mail referred to him as "the one that got away", and the gist of much discussion of this work turns on a larger landscape painter that the present generation never produced inside Canada. I'd say "escaped" would be closer to the truth: having graduated from Toronto's Jarvis Collegiate, Doig surveyed the prospects for representational painting in Canada, judged them (correctly) to be bleak, and hi-tailed to England, where he's had a stellar career.

"Canada" is the putative subject of most of these paintings, but I think in a more rhetorical than literal sense. They rather take up Borges' dream-like definition of the country: "Canada is a place so far away it doesn't really exist". Many of his stretchers follow the classical proportions that Senelleur, the famous Paris frame-maker, calls Paysage, but where are these landscapes seen, who inhabits them? The invitation piece is an odd, bimaterial work that appears to be the same scene twice, with one side reversed then hung against the first. In fact, it's based on a picture of a crowded skating rink in Tokyo, but its lateral expansion, combined with its colours and handling, make me think of The Falls at Lake Memphremagog, that 1795 icon of early Canadian art history.

Arguably the best piece in the show is Cabin Essence, and it's based on a le Corbusier-designed dormitory in the woods of Northern France. And why shouldn't it be? It beautifully conveys the ambiguity of dread and reassurance that the eye seeks in a northern place. The windows, beams, roofline create a solid, horizontal block amongst the oozing, oily verticals that predominate in the foreground and middleground.

When he moves into explicitly Nightmare on Elm Street territory (in a couple of paintings), the fine psychological balance that Doig navigates tips into a fairly hollow comedy. In Canoe Lake, the original video image of a canoe is stretched across the whole canvas, and the person in it is transformed into a green ghoul trailing an arm in the water (the artist has helpfully included many of his source images in a showcase near the gallery entrance). In another, a man with a police car behind him shouts across a pond, as water swirls mysteriously around his ankles.

When they're at their best, though, these paintings play a local, Canadian-1960s variant on a formal landscape model: no earth-shattering surprises, but pictures that are romantic, spatially convincing, and a pleasure to look at in their expansive generosity of field.

Oliver Girling

YOKO ONO - YES!

February 22nd - May 20th, 2002

Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St. W
Toronto, Ont. M5T 1H4
Tel: 416-977-0414

Between the icebongs of minimalism, conceptual and performance art, Yoko Ono forged a particular brand of time (er)motion study with compassion and a basic humanimal wisdom, manifesting this in a vast array of ways: music, performance, objects, installations, in film. "I would like to see the sky machine on every corner of the street instead of the coke machine" Ono wrote in Grapefruit in 1974. Chance, the fusion and unusual juxtaposition of idea and object, and an eclectic mix of philosophical and religious world-views came together in Ono's art. As early as 1961 she performed A Piece for Strawberries and Violin, and AOS - To David Tudor at Carnegie Hall. The conceptual bias seen in Ono's art, most evident in her early 1960s and 1970s works, were part of the tenor or fashion of art from that era. A lot of this is on view at the AGO.

The Yoko Ono Yes tour, the first major retrospective of Ono's art production ever in North America, includes 150 works. Many are Fluxus inspired, with a particular attitude to colour, form and materiality that is highly conceptual. Pointlessness (1964-66) for instance, consists of a simple crystal sphere with the words: "This sphere will be a sharp point when it gets to the far corners of the room in your mind." Three Spoons (1967), places not three, but four spoons in a box (despite, or because of, the title). Duchampian tricks of the eye and mind informed with a Zen-like sensibility were always Yoko Ono's forte. While sometimes they seem a bit obvious, in the broader scale Ono's imagination and vision helped push the London and New York art scenes into the mainstream of Pop culture in the 1960s and 1970s. Her actions and writings liberated not only women, but men as well, from the habits and mores of the post-war patriarchy. FOR THE ROSES, NO BOMBS! We see it in
Sky TV (1966) a rare Ono video work that featured a live feed of sky and cloud movement onto a gallery screen. Water Piece (Painting to be Watered) (1962-66) with its natural sponge, eye dropper and water, reveals that basic sensitivity to nature's energy, movements and processes. Yoko Ono never abandoned this wisdom and continues to thrive on the exchange between materials, energy and idea.

Among the objects, installations, works on paper, photodocs, and films presented for the Yest tour are Ono's classic 22 Instructions for Paintings (1962). Originally exhibited at Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo in 1962 Ono displayed instructions as paintings in an attempt to push the visual art to some optimal conceptual point. As Ono said: "It would open up a whole new horizon for the visual arts. I was totally excited by the idea and its visual possibilities. To make the point that the instructions were not themselves graphic images, I wanted the instructions to be typed." (An earlier, less purist series with instructions on canvas were shown at the AG Gallery, New York.) Ono instruction painting: "Write five hundred telephone numbers on a canvas in a space as large as your palm. The numbers can be overlapped with one another. Also, the numbers can all be the same. Observe the drawing by enlarging it with a microscope. Also, you may take a seminar on this number."

The LIVE notion that these events, tomorrows, Ono captured a body bottom which made the point that the instructions were not in the AGO show but served the drawing by enlarging it with a microscope. Also, you may take a seminar on this number.

Yoko Ono's involvement with John Lennon opened up a whole exchange. She commissioned billboards stating WAR IS OVER! for Times Square, New York and DER KRIEG IST ALS! for Berlin in 1969. Accomas for Peace (1969) consisted of one zoom each. To each of the world leaders with a request they plant it for peace. John and Yoko's bed-ins for peace in the Amsterdam Hilton, and in the Bonn-Aventura in Montreal, the Surrender to Peace add they took out in the New York Times (1983), helped fire up a generation who lived with idealism, loved their performances, and followed their actions with work with a passion. These interventions and actions often involved reduction, unifying the materialist mind. Ono's comment: "Make yourself dispensable, like paper." This ephemeral (Asian) vista view surfaces continually, in the hero videos and films. Fly (1970) documented a fly moving across a woman's body - the commonplace event becomes epic. Her early films No. 1 and Eyeball stretch and elongate a moment into several minutes. These filmic experiments presaged Andy Warhol's later continuous real time time films. For No. 4 (Fluxfilm #16) better known as Bottoms, Ono captured a body bottom from derriere. The shots are so close-up, it becomes an aesthetic statement.

What remains, after all the 1960s ideas, concepts, idealism and excess baggage have evaporated in thin air, is not some reality outside ourselves, but is the result of an interior process that makes and sustains our body image and its relationship to a world. The success of Pandraemonium depends upon which side of the Matrix you inhabit.

The installation occupies a dim space lit by two video projections on either side of a blue figure that lies on a table in the center of the room. Suspended above the body is a homemade virtual reality helmet - all wires, exposed hardware and chassis. A wall text offers a cautious invitation: Though meant to be touched, the work is fragile. The device (the text claims) translates brainwaves into code that alters the abstract images we see projected on the right-hand wall. The body is a plaster cast of a young man. He is of average height, bald and fit. Because the cast is coated with thermochromic paint, its tone fades slightly in response to the warmth of your hand. Touch is key to this work. As you glide your hands over the body, sensors activate the second screen and the VR headset - both show funny video images taken from what look like old movies, including some film noirish scenes. (In my passage I found six sensors.)

**Sky TV (1966)**

A rare video work that featured a live feed of sky and cloud movement onto a gallery screen. It is reinforced with a natural sponge, eye dropper and water, revealing that basic sensitivity to nature's energy, movements and processes.

**Water Piece (Painting to be Watered) (1962-66)**

An innovative piece with its natural sponge, eye dropper and water. It invited the viewer to observe the work by enlarging it with a microscope. Additionally, seminars on the numbers involved could be taken.

**Yoko Ono's Involvement with John Lennon**

Yoko Ono's work has a significant impact on the art world. She continued to push the boundaries of visual art through her instruction pieces, which became a form of performance art. Her collaboration with John Lennon, especially through the bed-ins for peace, further solidified her status as a pioneering figure in the art world.

**Yoko Ono's Works on Paper and Films**

Yoko Ono's works on paper and films, such as her 1962 series of 22 Instructions for Paintings, have been influential. Her films, including Fly (1970), documented a fly moving across a woman's body, highlighting the ephemeral nature of her work. These films presaged Andy Warhol's later continuous real-time films.

**Live Installations**

Yoko Ono's live installations, such as the bed-ins for peace, were a significant part of her work. These events were meant to evoke a sense of idealism and passion, and they continued to thrive even as the art world evolved.

**Yoko Ono's Influence on Future Art**

Yoko Ono's work has had a lasting influence on contemporary art. Her use of instruction pieces and live installations have inspired artists and audiences alike, continuing to challenge traditional notions of art and its role in society.

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The thesis seems to be that memory is distributed through the body and can be activated kinesthetically. The idea is terrific, but the images the artists chose are disappointing. Like the body, they are generic, Hollywood clips from half a century or more ago. It is difficult to develop a narrative or find anything specific about the mind/body that might have generated them. It may be that the authors are suggesting that in the media age our memories are collective, engineered by movies and television. Even so, wouldn’t the images that inform our memories be compelling?

The blurry projections, however, are magical and approach the uncanny sublime. They resemble a moment in the brilliant 1967 British sci-fi/horror movie *Quatermass and the Pit* (aka *Five Million Miles to Earth*). In a key scene, the hero scientist dons a strange headgear that transmits mental images from one mind to another. The blurry video-like scenes are ancient alien “memories” stored in dormant human DNA – Jung’s collective unconscious with a Martian twist. The activation of these memories leads to chaos as people become possessed by their alien aspect. Woodrow and Dunning’s *Pandaemonium* has an equally engaging form but the content is not compelling.

It is important to see *Pandaemonium* as part of a greater whole, the *Einstein’s Brain Project*, which includes other installations and a website (http://www.ucalgary.ca/~einsteinbrain). If you look at the website you are likely to be more sympathetic. There is much poetry in this collage of ideas. The voice is that of a mad (computer) scientist who has overdosed on continental philosophy and cyber-hype. The voice is convinced that it inhabits the threshold of a new paradigm. If you suspend your disbelief (hope and lived experience) and engage in the text’s enthusiasm, you realize that the work is in the traditions of conceptual art and fiction. The play (of ideas) is the thing. If you immerse yourself in these solipsistic musings as a form of serious play, you are more likely to appreciate the alembic; if not, the work might appear as gimmick. Woodrow and Dunning are like the Matrix’s Morpheus and it is up to the viewer to choose the red or the blue pill.

Missing from their website is a notion of what may be the “real” content of *Pandaemonium*. The installation sets up a situation where men, women and children are invited to explore a maze,, giddy, young man in the dark. I observed some uncomfortable people – particularly young men caught between technological curiosity and homosexual panic-searching for his erogenous triggers!

David Garneau

**VICTORIA**

**VICTORIA BLOCK:**

**SURFACES**

Nov. 22 - Dec. 3, 2002
Galerie de la Ville
Centre des arts de Dollard
12001 de Salaberry
Dollard des Ormeaux
Tel.: 681-1012

Galerie St-Laurent + Hill
333 Cumberland
Ottawa, Ont. K1N 7J3
Tel.: 613-789-7145

Exposition permanente
Beaux-arts David Astof
356 rue McTavish
Tel.: 262-9212

For her latest show, Montreal artist Victoria Block has brought together a selection of recent ceramics and paintings. The latest paintings markedly contrast the large-scale pastels depicting atmospheres of water and sky for which Block is renowned. As the title of this show – *Surfaces* – suggests, these new works involve the surface of things – be it on a flat two-dimensional surface or the three-dimensional surface of a ceramic piece.

Victoria Block has worked with ceramics for years, not exclusively for exhibition, but more out of personal interest. The ceramic works vary from gourd-like shapes to tiled surfaces to pots. They all draw on forms and patterns from nature. Influences on her ceramic work include Amazone pottery from New Mexico, and the ceramicist June Kaneko. The visual effect of the surface patterns is mesmerizing. The overview and abstract patterning carried over from the flat into the two-dimensional “tiling” to the three-dimensional pot forms. The effect of this black and white patterning is almost hallucinatory; like looking down at the topography of a landscape from the air. The materiality of the three-dimensional dissolves into pure pattern.

In *Slipstream*, there are sinuous, undulating patterns in black and white on the surface of both the three-dimensional pots and the flat tilings that unify the piece. These patterns recall the rhythms of nature and the forces that shape the world around us. They can inspire us with a sense of mystery and above all – beauty. A trompe l’oeil effect is achieved by disguising the dimensionality of the three clay pots. Linear design patterns effectively camouflage the pots into the flat surrounds of a tile designed to achieve in her recent paintings like the *Open Road* series. The viewer is encouraged to imagine the piece. This *Focus* focus effect paraphrases visual experience – how our memory of a place or experience can become generalized or flattened out.

The gritty resonance, Block achieves in her recent paintings likewise leaves us in a dilemma over surface and content. We can’t read further into these works and the ambiguous surface textures merely rely on the independence of the painting as an object from that which it represents... Block’s *Journey* trip, for instance, recreates a scene one might see looking out of a cabin window...
into nature. The window effect establishes an immediate parameter or frame the viewer looks through or into. A tension is established between the landscape scene depicted and the paintery surface effect. For its very inexactitude, and Latour's own perception of a landscape scene, the journey reenacts the visual/optical effect of being there. It is more about the sensation of things, than the recording or depiction of "what reality represents".

No Gold Frame builds the same textural surface effect, recreating a landscape scene from near the Rivière Rouge region of Quebec. Victoria Black's art has a spiritual dimension. This displacement of that sensation of the wilderness or landscape experience, transformed from memory, onto the surface of things — builds a new world of tactile effect and visual sensation.

It has a life of its own.

John K. Grande

**CONTOURS:**

**EXTENDED PAINTING IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

December 7, 2001 - March 3, 2002
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
1040 Moss Street, Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1P1
Tel: 250.384.4010
Fax: 250.384.3995
courriel: aggv@aggv.bc.ca

**Contours**: an exhibition that extends the language of painting, examines the work of ten artists -- five from Victoria, five from Seattle. Based on past curatorial moments at the AGGV, Contours recalls solo Seattle artist exhibitions from the 1950's and 1960's initiated by then director, Colin Graham i.e. Mark Tobey: Recent Paintings (1957), and Morris Graves (1959); and Seattle Now, a group exhibition from 1984 curated by Greg Belcher. The most recent incarnation pairs the talents of Lisa Baldissera, Curator of Contemporary Art at the AGGV, and Matthew Kangas, guest curator from Seattle. As Lisa Baldissera notes, this exhibition is not intended to be a survey of Pacific Northwest work, but instead focuses exclusively on the production of ten artists' work.

Tom Burrows' polymer resin paintings (four diptychs), are beautiful objects — minimal and seductive. Milly Way (2001), pairs two panels — one a deep, smoky aubergine and the other black. The latter has "Alphabets" that cluster in suspension, forming constellations reminiscent of the night sky. Like the paintings of Vija Celmins and Paterson Ewen, Tom Burrows' works are elegiac meditations on life and its passing. Victoria Arrangement (2001-2002), a painting installation by Seattle artist Susan Dory, articulates the wall. Seventeen panels of various dimensions employ a complex technique of sprayed enamel and wax on birch. Stenciled patterns emerge and dissolve as though viewed through the lens of a microscope. The randomly organized abstract patterns resemble structures found in nature. Three works by Isabel Kahn, a Seattle printmaker, reference traditional textiles such as kimono and prayer shawls. Kahn combines intricate layers of handmade mulberry paper mounted on muslin. She works small sections of alternating prints, mounting them together into architectural pieces like Grass Ladder (2000). The structure of this scroll is comprised of twelve sections that combine ink wash painting with printmaking techniques. The Space Between is (2001), a wall-sized mural in two sections has a rhythmic, surface, organic, and punctuated painterly surface effect. For its very inexactitude, and Latour's own perception of a landscape scene, the journey reenacts the visual/optical effect of being there. It is more about the sensation of things, than the recording or depiction of "what reality represents".

Imagine a Jules Oliteki canvas in Seattle (1999), a deceptively delicate oil on canvas, hung in isolation, depicts a steam locomotive, the little engine that couldn't, derailing into an indeterminate landscape. Framed by a device that resembles a dysfunctional chandelier (light source), this painting is apocalyptic. Derailment as a metaphor for art and life is a frightening and an exhilarating thought. If we continue to believe art is necessary for civilization to continue, then derailment, creative or spiritual, or both is welcome and necessary. Contours as an exhibition, supports this notion.

Linda Eltes

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**Michele Bietz** "Rose" 9 1/2" x 6 1/4" x 4" bronze.

**Patrick Holderfield**

(Untitled Bumper), 1998
Metal polystyrene foam and acrylic paint
Courtesy of Artist and James Harries Gallery, Seattle