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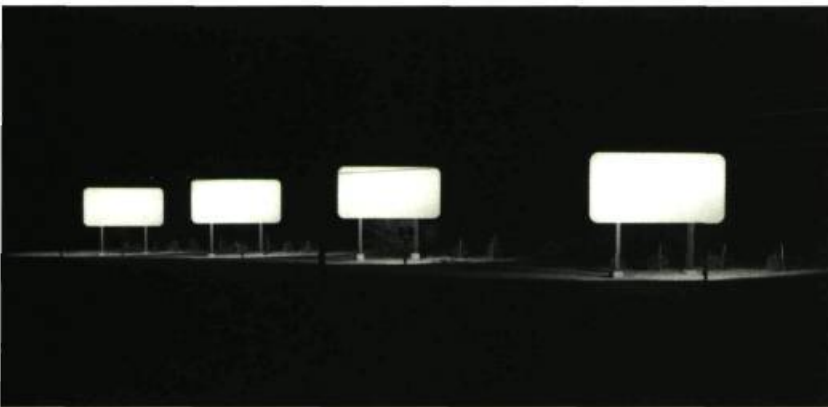
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HALIFAX

SIGNS: PHOTOGRAPHS
BY PAUL GRIFFIN

Dalhousie Art Gallery
6101 University Ave.
13 August to 3 October 2004
Tel.: 902 494-2403



Four, 2004
dye-coupler print on aluminum,
image courtesy of the artist

There are sixteen large borderless black and white photographs mounted on aluminum in this exhibition by Sackville artist Paul Griffin. Fourteen of the works are four by four foot and one is four by six foot while the remaining picture is eight by four foot. The first thing that struck me about this exhibition, other than the size of the works, was the starkness of the photographs. Nonetheless they are very beautiful. This is a modernist exhibition and Griffin is a self-confessed modernist in a postModern world. All the photographs in this exhibition are of roadside signs. The signs are, for one reason or another, devoid of text, blank, mute, nude of any reason for being there. However, in their blank state, they appear more like sculpture rather than a medium for advertising. As well as being a photographer, Paul is also a sculptor and has, in the past, combined the two mediums.

The artist has photographed three kinds of signs; one is signs that have yet to receive text; two, signs where the text is covered by a wrap prior to being unveiled and, thirdly, signs where the message has been painted over or simply worn away. As well, there are a couple of images of the back side of some signs. All the images in the works possess a strange dignity. An example is *four*, the largest work in the exhi-

bition, which is a night shot of four identical white painted blank signs in a row. They do resemble a minimalist sculpture installation – pure starkness against the night sky. I know where this photograph was taken. It was on a road into Amherst, Nova Scotia, a neighbouring town

just across the boarder from Sackville, New Brunswick. These four signs have now received commercial messages and have gone from being majestic icons to just other boring, and intrusive, signs. Of course, to quote Marshall McLuhan: “The Medium is the Message” and the purpose of roadside signs are to sell something or, at the very least, to give information.

You could give Griffin’s pictures a postModern reading such as the failure of Capitalism to get its message across or the failure of language itself, but to do so would be to miss the artist’s intent – to create through his art something beautiful that transcends the humble origins of his subject matter. Griffin shot these photographs over a six year period, though the sixteen pictures in *Signs* are all dated 2004 which is the year that these pieces were printed. The images of view comprise a small part of the hundreds of pictures that Paul Griffin has taken for this project. He could take other images from the project and produce another exhibition that would be a very different reading on the idea of signs.

The photographs in this exhibition are what I call straight photograph in that they employ a purist approach to the medium with little

cropping of the images and virtually no, if any, manipulation of the image during printing. Toronto photographer Robin Collyer, mentioned in the exhibition catalogue essay by Robert Bean, digitally removes texts from signs in his photographs of the urban landscape a very post Modern contrast to Paul Griffin’s approach to signs in photography. Griffin identifies with abstract expressionist and minimalist artists such as Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman neither of whom are photographers. He shares their vision but not their medium. That vision uses minimal means to achieve maximal effect. An effort is required by viewers to understand the intent of the artists. This means, in the case of Griffin’s photographs, that the viewer has to go beyond the content of the pictures and respond to the beauty of the images.

There are many strong images in this exhibition. I particularly like *black triangle* which is an image of the back a small triangular sign beside a highway and *black and cedars* which is a picture of a large blacked out sign amidst a small grove of cedars. The photographs in *Signs* are interesting works presented in an unusual way. They deserve to be seen outside of the Halifax area. Hopefully this exhibition will travel to other venues in the near future.

Virgil Hammock

CARAQUET, NEW BRUNSWICK

FESTIVAL DES ARTS VISUELS
EN ATLANTIQUE (FAVA)

June 30th to July 4th, 2004
Carrefour de la mer
Tel.: 506-727-7726

Returning to Acadia in 2004, for its 400th anniversary of settlement, one could hear accordion music outside the main exhibition building beside the harbour just before the event opened. Nearby Quebec native sculptor and artist Jacques Nêwashish created an installation over the duration of the event that became an evolving performance. With a central boat form it included spirit catchers, and a forest of brightly painted poles evoking a sense of the sea and its movement.

The latest edition of FAVA in Caraquet had as its theme *Blue Architecture* which captured notions of the sea and habitat. A wide range of works were presented this year including installation, painting, and sculpture. This year’s invited artist was Pokemouche born Donald McGraw. His exhibition comprised a series of portraits of native Chiefs in full regalia and headdresses, in natural settings. Carole Bherer built an installation that utilized the basic shape of a habitation, and arranged a series of cut-out wood shapes that rose and fell like a wave in motion. Painted in bright whimsical colours, each “structure” in this composite sculpture had a xylophone note attached. Carole Bherer’s sculpture/installation could thus be played, interacted with by visitors to the event. Bherer’s art has continuously presented an awareness of our place in nature, of the elements, and of the strong links between identity and the landscape with a subtle and simple confidence in her ability to communicate with the community she lives in. As she states: “Each house represents a person and the sea is our point of origin.”

Caraquet native Paul Ouellette presented an incredible range of his sculptures he has been making for



Marie-Hélène
Alain
Secrets de vannes/Secrets of Alder, 2003
detail of installa

over 5 years now; carved assemblages, drawings and multi-media paintings with objects and elements found along the shoreline near his home. Always lively, some are boats, racing cars, others people, historic or marine events. Ouellette's imagination is as large as the world and from another time. Marielle Poirier presented a heart-shaped sculpture installation in the central space of the event that included elements from the immediate region such as huge recycled timbers from a former blacksmith's shop. Michel Marin constructed a structure using blue tarpaulin, and balloons taking the theme quite literally. Jean Côté produced some unusual spontaneous multi-media assemblage paintings using found objects, and painterly abstraction. Lise Robichaud made an installation called *A l'ombre des Iris* With its pickets and allusions to the iris, a flower that symbolizes *la francophonie*, the Caraquet work continued a piece Robichaud made in Poitiers, France in 2003 that alluded to the displacement of the Acadians including the names of such settler families as Comeau, LeBlanc, Savoie, and Thibodeau.

Muriel Faille made an installation with tiny boats suspended in space as if in a dream. Made of deerskin these fragile boats communicate something of the fragility of traditional life. Seen as a collectivity, they represent the Acadian presence in this region and their history of travel, of departure and return. Marie-Hélène Alain brought an incredible 35 sculptures (13 identified, 22 not identified) to FAVA. These sculptures became a collective installation piece. Each was a unique and hybrid form that fused stone and alder wood, even bronze elements. Inscribed words allude to the stoic and lively Acadian peoples' character. Alain states: "An Acadie without borders cannot be defined by its geography. It has no other choice but to refer to its history." Stone, for Alain is witness to everything. Stone can represent the sacrifices one makes and the pain experienced in life's struggle. Plans for a more ambitious FAVA next year are already under way! Everybody welcome!!

John K. Grande

SOREL-TRACY

ÉLAINE DESPINS: *PRÉSENCE / ÉMERGENCE*

Centre d'exposition
des Gouverneurs
12 Sept. - 17 October
www.leceg.com

As if out of nowhere, grand oils by Quebec artist Éleine Despins have appeared in several galleries across the province. A paean to the human body and a bold manifesto in defense of figurative art, her paintings are a marvel to behold, though seeing is not the immediate intention of this unusual artist. Her bodies are meant to be "felt" rather than observed. Suspended in impenetrable blackness, they hover in a fetal position in the upper part of the painting, their backs to the viewer. Male and female, they lie quietly in this womb-like darkness, vulnerable, defenseless, almost unbearably human. Their embryonic contortions recall a fetus, yet these are adult bodies. This makes their position and nakedness all the more symbolic. The pictorial, plastic quality of Despins' paintings is flawless, as is the complex, subtle play of colours on the stretched skin of the models. It accentuates the lifelike, tactile texture of the body, emerging from the soft, cushioning darkness in a delicate aura of light.

Seven large oils compose the *Présence/Émergence* series; 143 cm x 183 cm paintings that line the walls like a mysterious pantheon of faceless beings, their backs the only canvas of emotion for the viewer to decipher. Once in a while, a foot or a palm turned outward distracts the eye, its flaccid surrender adding to the sense of vulnerability permeating these works. As if to aid the viewer, Despins sketches barely visible faces at the bottom of some of the paintings, an emergence of features, a hint of a personality. These ghostly apparitions are an interesting compositional ploy as well, never disturbing the quiet repose of the suspended bodies, yet creating a slight ripple in the overall composition, a tear in the curtain as it were. Other smaller square portraits of faces grimace in motion.

There is a wonderful painterly quality to these works, the melange of pinks and yellows against her

trademark velvety blackness, turns these faces into shimmering apparitions, neither male nor female, vague and strangely beautiful. Profoundly visual and emotional, these works explore an inner vision. Despins is in the foreground of young Quebec artists who seek to reinvent figurative painting. These are all artists whose works speak of a quality achieved only through a complete and unfaltering dedication to the medium. Art is a hard taskmaster. Despins will exhibit at the Edward Day Gallery in Toronto in April 2005.

Dorota Kozinska

MONTREAL

SCOTT MACLEOD: *THE LACHINE CANAL PAST AND PRESENT*

to November 30th
Maxwell Building Annex:
McAuslan Brewery
5080 Rue St. Ambroise
Tel.: 939-3060



Scott MacLeod
Jackknife Bridge (Gavron Bridge)
oil on wood, 2004

Scott MacLeod's exhibition of paintings, drawings and photographs of the historic Lachine Canal touch on a much neglected aspect of Montreal history. The canal is a living legacy of Canada's economic and social history. Once a 14.5 kilometre water route linking Montreal's Old Port to Lake St. Louis the Lachine canal opened in 1825. It was the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1970 that ended a long history of shipping on the canal.

Sponsored by Peter McAuslan and presently in the Annex (visitor centre) of the McAuslan Brewery this long-term project and exhibition, includes historical storyboards about the buildings, businesses, bridges, boats and locks that border on the Lachine Canal. From former glory to present-day rehabilitation the canal is the focus for

Scott MacLeod's show and recalls art of the 1920s and 1930s with its nostalgia for the industrial era. The buildings, bridges, cranes, docks, and boats depicted in MacLeod's art express something of how vital a



Scott MacLeod
Lock No. 5, 2004
graphite on mylar

part of life the Lachine canal was for Montrealers and Canadians in general.

A source of hydraulic power this industrial corridor was one of the main manufacturing production centres in Canada from the mid-19th century to Second World War, the Canal will change rapidly over the next 20 years as the City of Montreal redevelops its waterfront areas into housing, loft, and recreation areas with walking and bicycle paths and boating along its waterfront.

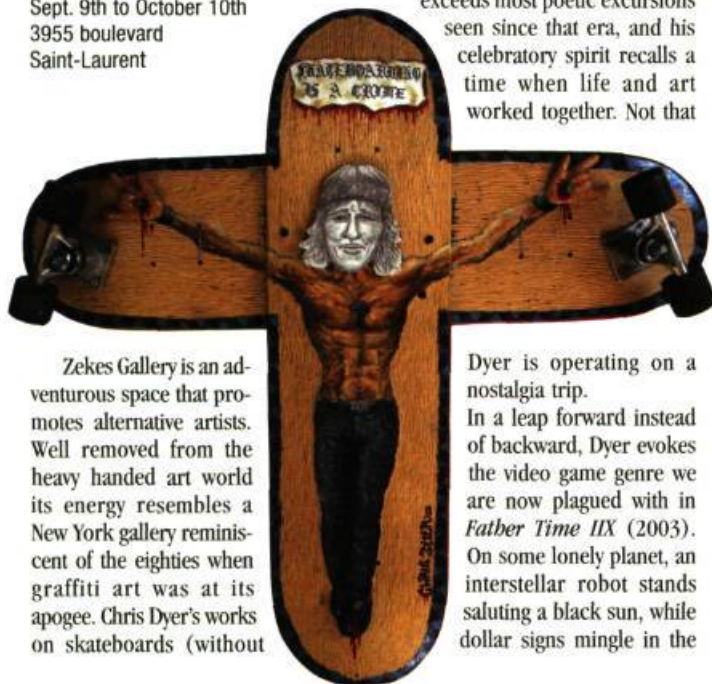
Industrial architecture with a past history, a living museum in the present, the canal carries all the traces and markings of its past with a quiet majesty. How often do artists document places like this these

days? Scott MacLeod is one of the few who do, and his oil and graphite works capture a feeling of past industrial grandeur in the present. The paintings and sketches in this show range from a Railway Bridge to the Five Roses Flour Mill building. An old iron bridge becomes a sublime piece of sculpture while a 75 ton Floating Crane used to unload goods stands starkly against the sky. The Canadian Pacific Railway Bridge is pure beautiful engineering and in another painting a boat sits in Lock No. 5 lit up by night lights. Some subjects such as the Redpath Sugar Northern Electric and Corticelli Buildings or "Jackknife Bridge" become panoramic scenes that recreate the feeling that the Lachine Canal with its coal Derricks, Coleco Building, and Canadian Malting Building is a living museum of industrial building and marine artifacts. The majesty and industrial history of Canada is nowhere more evident than in the Lachine Canal. Scott MacLeod brings it to life. Montreal's McAuslan Brewery has brought about the event and hopefully will engender further cultural and artistic exchanges on their premises in the future.

John K. Grande

CHRIS DYER: METAPHYSICAL BOARDING VISIONARY SKATE ART

Zeke's Gallery
Sept. 9th to October 10th
3955 boulevard
Saint-Laurent



Zeke's Gallery is an adventurous space that promotes alternative artists. Well removed from the heavy handed art world its energy resembles a New York gallery reminiscent of the eighties when graffiti art was at its apogee. Chris Dyer's works on skateboards (without

wheels) are sheer explosions of poetic wit and psychedelic colour helped along by an attitude of willful joy and celebration. Compared with much of what is going on now in alternative art, these works are a timely kick in the pants to a scene somewhat paralyzed by an unhealthy fetish for death and negation.

Without the wheels, the skateboards appear like time capsules of the artist's personal experiences and fantasies. Some of these pieces function simply as decorative work done in explosively bright colours, but the best incorporate collage, poem and paint together in a frenzy of image and text. In *Memory of Mexican Visual Chronicles* has small seashells that adorn a skateboard above an ink drawing of an old man (resembling Don Juan Mateus, the shaman in Carlos Castenedas novels) while beneath we can see a panoramic representation of people partying by a beach with Mexican temples in the distance. We can read "This piece in memory of the skateboard I took hitchhiking through a month in Mexico. This visual chronicle was stolen from a show I had at the *Le Swimming* so if you ever see it anywhere please let me know. Thanx", written beneath the imagery.

At only 24 years old, Dyer can hardly be expected to connect with the beat movement of the 1950s, yet his reach for the stars in terms of his sheer exuberant production far exceeds most poetic excursions seen since that era, and his celebratory spirit recalls a time when life and art worked together. Not that

Dyer is operating on a nostalgia trip. In a leap forward instead of backward, Dyer evokes the video game genre we are now plagued with in *Father Time IIX* (2003). On some lonely planet, an interstellar robot stands saluting a black sun, while dollar signs mingle in the

sky with stars. Dyer has written beside the image... "Father Time went insane when he was separated from Eternity. In revenge he holds us hostage in a dimension where some laws are hard to break." Definitely a raucous poet of a fine cut, Chris Dyer's youth and energy hold the promise great expectations for the coming years.

Isak Elliott Augustine

GEZA HERMANN: FLOWER MEDITATIONS

Galerie Clair Obscur
2374 Beaubien est
Tel.: 514-596-0943
www.galerieclairobscur@bellnet.ca

Having worked for over 30 years as a landscape designer, Geza Hermann is quite familiar with nature as his medium but usually it is a three-dimensional, physical entity. There is no question that and in the landscape inspired this new series of works. *The Flower Meditations* comprise a lively series of ink and watercolour sketches and larger scale paintings. These works are bright, evocative, calligraphic notations. They provoke a sense of being in the here and now in the viewer. The fluid lines and colours capture, as a painterly process, the fleeting nature of life itself. Beauty is distilled in a very minimal way down to a few lines and bright colorations. Infused with a sense of light and colour, always in momentary transition, these paintings vary from small to very large in size. Their spirit is as ephemeral as life.

Geza Hermann's first solo in Montreal in years signals a new interest by Montreal galleries such as Clair Obscur in home grown local talent. As Hermann comments: "My experience as a landscape designer, my interest in sculpture and experiments in painting have all come together. These influences impact the subjects and materials I have chosen for my paintings over the years. The new body of work first appeared in the Spring of 2004, out of a need to simplify and to create (that which was wishing to reveal itself), without any reference to anything specific, but the act of painting beginning from a quiet mind, starting from stillness. What evolved



Flower Meditation, 2004

were archetypal flower and plant-like entities on paper or canvas, growing and transforming with each daily meditation."

John K. Grande

VAL DAVID

MICHÈLE CAMPEAU, CHRISTINE MARCHAND AND LOUISE BLOOMSPUNT

to Oct.15th
La Maison du Village
2495, de l'Eglise
Tel.: 819-322-2900 xt 238
<http://www.culture.val-david.qc.ca/>

Michèle Campeau's *L'arbre dans le paysage*, a collection of evocative collography, etching, and mixed media on handmade paper, demonstrates her prowess as a master printer. Her imaginary landscapes have titles such as *Mémoire d'un arbre*, *L'arbre un être immobile*, *Les rêverie d'un arbre* and feature the tree as a metaphor. The trees she paints are immobile, feeling, living beings, and could be a firm support for land and humanity.

Christine Marchand's poetic collection entitled *Entre ouvrir et contenir*, combines print-making with painting and installation. The human heart and flowers represent a private, life-protecting space,

something enclosed within. For her installations, Marchand incorporates branches, roots, twigs, papier mâché hearts, painting, actual printing plates prints collaged together.

Louise Bloom-Spunt, who graduated from Sir George Williams University in 1967, presents *Monuments*. She took a year away from teaching to concentrate on old masters painting techniques, and this required a complete transformation of her work process. The result is a collection of oil paintings. These portraits, some of which are life size, are done in traditional *camaïeux*, combining raw umber, ultramarine and white. The colour scheme is foggy yet clear, giving the paintings an aura of old faded photographs. This makes the images look even more nostalgic than the photos she worked from. The paintings, some of family and friends, are quite personal, yet one can share in the universal warmth that emanates from scenes such as Louise as a young girl with her uncle *Irvin and Louise*, (2004). Louise Bloom-Spunt has succeeded in enhancing facial expressions and body language taken from old photos. This is particularly evident in her painting *Ronnie Dancing* (after a photo taken at Rose's Café in Morin Heights in the early 1980s). The painting is so vivid that I kept on going back to look at it. As Louise Bloom-Spunt says: "These monuments are in the museum of my life ... tender moments that recall the fleeting nature of life. The



Louise Bloom-Spunt
Ronnie Dancing, 2004
oil on canvas, 44.5 x 89 cm.
Photo: Courtesy of Louise
Bloom-Spunt

Christine Marchand
Entre la Terre et le ciel, 2004
installation, acrylic on engraved
wood, paper, roots, and earth.
Photo: Ilania Abileah.

images as monuments serve to remind us that if we do not remain conscious and open we miss these moments. All we really have is "now"... These images intend to remember in the way that we erect monuments in the Jewish faith to those that have passed "so as not to forget."

Ilania Abileah

OTTAWA

PHIL BERGERSON

SHARDS OF AMERICA

Sept. 9th, 2004 – Jan. 9th, 2005
Canadian Museum of Contemporary
Photography
1 Rideau Canal
Tel.: 613-990-8257
www.cmcp.gallery.ca



New York, New York, October 2000

Phil Bergerson's photographs, witnessed in this retrospective, reflect, as all great photography has done, the real world. Even more than this, as great photography has done, Bergerson interprets the world. The many fragments of reality witnessed in these photographs are very much in the tradition of Lee Friedlander, or Robert Walker. The difference, or distinction between Bergerson and others, is that he delights in the fragment, the tiny detail, for and if itself. Indeed, his photography could be read as an accurate reflection of a culture built on distraction, where the parts do not add up to a complete whole,

but instead are enigmatic and coincidental visual layers.

In *New York, New York* (2001), a window display Barbie-type doll is draped in the American flag and stands Marilyn Monroe-like in front of a n American flag that is the backdrop. The quirky and sometimes chaotic contrasting of messages (an iconoclastic controversy if ever there was one) can be seen in the collaged doorway image of naughty frolicking playmates in undies, next to a more composite and serene Jesus Christ. The style of representation is not that different!

These photos capture fragments of the everyday, and are the result of a 10 year odyssey by this Canadian photographer, and Phil Bergerson does not capture reality, but reads it visually as a synchronous environment of collaging and contrasting images. A *LOANS* sign on a window

contrasts a picture of Jesus in *The Last Supper*, while a Sale sticker reads \$249.00 The pale blue tile, window frame and sunlight bring a real life character to it all. Reflections on a window, white underwear and the incongruous REJOICE packaging suggest that if this is not Baptist country, God is in the product.

The often overlooked, seldom noticed, state of contemporary culture is what Phil Bergerson feeds on visually in this fun show. As he states he is "sifting through the remains of a civilization, the quirky remains of North America's cultural legacy... the display-maker, sign-maker, or object-maker produces his presentations without knowing the ironic or ambiguous nature of what he presents." If these photos indeed record "mixed messages" they are likewise informational, the result of a search that revealed an incredible range of "metaphorical possibilities". With enthusiasm, and an honest eye, Phil Bergerson is nothing if not human.

John K. Grande

TORONTO

MODIGLIANI: BEYOND THE MYTH

Art Gallery of Ontario
 October 23, 2004 – January 23, 2005
 317 Dundas Street West
 Toronto M5T 1G4
 Tel.: 416-979-6660 x403
 Fax: 416-204-2713



Caryatid, 1914
 gouache on wove paper, mounted
 on canvas, mounted on wood panel
 140.7 x 66.5 cm
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
 Gift of Oveta Culp Hobby

Modigliani: Beyond the Myth is the first solo exhibition in Canada to present a composite body of paintings, drawings and sculptures by Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920). With the A.G.O. being the only Canadian venue, this exhibition, already seen at The Jewish Museum in New York, will undoubtedly attract viewers from across Canada.

Modigliani is one of those artists (along with Dali) that many young people catch onto in art classes. One reason is for the simple and sensuous ways Modi portrayed the human body. An elegance, coupled with a simplicity of line and facial expression makes these modern masterpieces as classic and eternal as archaic sculpture. Modigliani the person lived a short and intense life,

but thankfully his art lives on.

Among the features of this show are the many portraits of various people. What characterizes many of them is the state of quietude and repose that these portraits express. The paintings have a quality of light and reduce colour to a few variables within a single composition. The elongated features, so characteristic of the faces Modi painted are appealing. Among the more memorable are Madame Pompadour, Pierre Reverdy, Paul Guillaume, Jean Cocteau and Max Jacob. The elegantly attired Leopold Zborowski with Lusia Czechowska (La femme a l'eventail) draw out the personality while rendering them timeless, eternal

Being a foreigner and Sephardic Jew in Paris made life difficult for Modigliani. Many of the most enjoyable works in this show, ironically are the less well preserved sketches in oil, ink or pencil on paper or cardboard. They give a sense of the bohemian way of life, of the model or patron, and the way Modigliani worked through an idea on paper, further simplifying or reducing the elements until the simple model begins to look like a universal symbol, a goddess. The stylization likewise works with the limestone busts of which there are several in the A.G.O. venue for the show.

As with Picasso or Brancusi, one senses the influence of primitive art – notably Egyptian, Cycladic, African and Early Christian – in Modigliani's sculpture although he had studied the sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio, Michelangelo and the 13th century Sienese artist Tino di Camaino before the legendary fourteen years in Paris.

Modigliani hybridized the influences in his remarkable *Caryatids* (1912-14). These sculptures of female figures recreate the notion of a sculpture being a practical support within an architecture. They are essentially vertical. In Mason Klein's catalogue essay *Modigliani Against the Grain* much ink is spent explaining Modigliani's unique Italian Sephardic Jewish background, and how culturally enriched, steeped in humanistic ideals and enlightened Jewish thinking the cosmopolitan setting of Livorno where Modi grew up was. Marc Chagall or other Jewish artists' were



Portrait of Mrs. Hastings, 1915
 Oil on paperboard
 55.5 x 45.4 cm
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
 Gift of Sam and Ayala Zacks, 1970
 © 2004 Art Gallery of Ontario

isolated culturally in comparison. Whatever the case, what becomes most apparent is that Modigliani loved the human figure and studied, painted, recorded it, with a remarkable closeness and familiarity. What a great artist and what a modest vision – thoughtful and composed – full of texture(s). Organized by The Jewish Museum, New York and made possible by the Jerome L. Greene Foundation, and with works from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art and Tate Gallery, London, the Modiglianis will travel on to The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. (Feb. 26 to May 29, 2005). A lover and not a fighter!

John K. Grande

**ANDREW MORROW:
 THE WAR PAINTING SERIES**

Edward Day Gallery
 September 9th – October 4th
 952 Queen St. W.
 Tel.: 416-921-6540
www.eddaygal.toronto@sympatico.ca

A gifted young painter from Toronto, Andrew Morrow has accomplished a remarkable body of work for his age. The *War Paintings* (2003-04) express an undeniable state of today's culture replete with image overload and material cultural emblems. Art historical traditions ironically integrate in Morrow's new found (part media-based, part real) style of history painting.

Locked in mortal combat or

simply looking on, the animals and peoples in Morrow's own words a "reaction to feelings of frustration and powerlessness relating to our climate of violence. It was also born from awe, at life's potential for incredible and beautiful physical extremes." Influenced by Polish painter Jan Matejko's historical canvas King Jan Sobieski's Relief of the Siege of Vienna (1879), Large War Painting, is an apotheosis of history with multiple views and cropped kinetic views, a cornucopia of personalities and figures drawn from various historical, geographical and cultural time periods. Whether Sumo wrestlers, armed chevaliers or World War 1 soldiers in gas masks, these humans live and fight uneasily together in the same paintings. Absurd and witty, Large War Painting witnesses athletes, an Indian chief, eagles, a rhinoceros, cobra snake, a wolf, and young alluring women. Amid assorted birds of prey, police in riot gear seek to control this allegorical and personal painted view of history. The atmosphere is infused with a sense of endless competition between people, and war permeates it all.

Though we may read of history in books, Morrow's message is that the human condition, the people, and natural history that collectively make up history and indeed inhabit this canvas as fragments are an accumulation of absurdity, not at all pure. The smaller *Detail from Unrealized War Painting* works feature in a tiny mock painted format such cropped elemental images as a rider and horse, an athlete, a helmeted football player. These paintings witness a series of simultaneous perspectives not unlike the way images are cropped, edited in films these days. As Morrow comments "Through the combination of various viewpoints and the manipulation of classical perspective, seemingly impossible spatial situations are made coherent and understandable" *Horizontal War Painting* (2004) has a central division with two opposing "armies" of people, events on either side. The subjects in Morrow's new paintings range from galloping jockeys to battling dinosaurs and the armies could as well be animals as humans. These people and animals are Charles Darwin's legacy. They fight



Large War Painting (a detail), 2003-2004
oil on canvas, 90" x 72"

willfully whether the sport is athletics or militaristic expansion. Many historical and media moments are brought together in a single painting. These paintings are as much about the prevalence of violence in today's media and culture, the sound bites and video clips we all know so well, as they are about the fictional character of history, and how one-sided history can be. For the way he neutralizes the colour scale, reduces it to oranges, pale yellows and monochrome, giving it that Mark Tansey-like quality, Morrow is definitely a painter to watch. Morrow's fictions are like an anthropology of the future set in the present, not unlike those representations of cavemen and dinosaurs from prehistoric unrecorded eras we all saw in history books during formative years.

John K. Grande

REGINA

MARY PRATT: SIMPLE BLISS

Mackenzie Art Gallery
August 28th – December 5th
T.C. Douglas Building
3475 Albert Street
Tel.: (306) 584-4250/Fax: 569-8191
mackenzie@uregina.ca

Mary Pratt, the master of domestic photo-realistic painting, is most closely associated with chilly chickens on a windowsill, luminous and sharply rendered bowls of fruit, and an affection for the sensual stretch of plastic wrap and the aggressive fragility of scintillating tinfoil. Her iconic work's bright and homey surface often hinted of darker personal narratives. Feminist critics of a quarter century ago saw an elevation of women's domestic work in these kitchen table homilies. A few went so far as to see rape in her

Eviscerated Chickens. But most of her images, as the Mackenzie's *Simple Bliss* testifies, do not writhe with political subtext but are about the pleasures of good food and a good home.

Evocative oil paintings like *Girl in My Dressing Gown*, *Cold Cream*, the wedding dress series, and some of the racier poultry and scarier fish are not here. Rather than include Pratt's works that are more self-consciously addressed to *art history* and to her painting, literary and critical colleagues, curator Pat Deadman has selected works that might be found in the sort of homes they document. The ten modest paintings, a drawing and ten prints (and some of the blocks that made them made them) are designed to comfort, not provoke.

The images are mostly of raw cooking, cooked and preserved foods set in familiar, rather generic, middle-class rooms and patios with few personal signs. There seems to be an effort to evoke a general sight rather than a sense of Pratt's individual experience. Sometimes, this leads to compositions that echo product shots, like those in Martha Stewart's magazine: bright, colourful and pretty arrangements against blurry backgrounds. *Light Lunch*, for example, features a tasteful assemblage of high and low items (silverware next to a Walmart-style mug) that resonate with Stewart's sense of "good things."

The provocative and seemingly autobiographical edge of Pratt's earlier works is not here (unless the artist simply is intensely happy, and why not!). This show is about pleasing and pleasure. And while there are some moments of awkward painting – a strangely floating tray in *Sunday Dinner*, for example, there are enough delights to warm the heart of all but the most jaded. *Pomegranates and a Knife* with its knife angled like a Dutch still-life painting seems to poke fun at that clichéd tradition while embracing its finer points. *Poppyseed Cake Glazed for Calypso* is a gem. Some of the compositions feel mediated by the camera and advertising, while others bring us through the lens and eye to the sensibility of the artist and the objects she contemplates.

The real surprise of this exhibition is the curator's decision to

show the artist's work; that is, the work that goes into making her prints. The still life *B. C. Delicious* is shown as line a drawing and in eleven printing states. The viewer has the chance to see the final image slowly come into being as each inked woodcut adds its nearly



Pomegranates and a Knife, 1999
oil on canvas, 50.8 x 61.0 cm
collection of Mr. David Hornblow

imperceptible contribution. We see the craft and sweat behind what appears to be a modest effort.

This educational display goes further with the display of the forty woodcuts that went into making *A Glow of Grapes on Garnet Glass*. The grid of maple panels, carved by Masato Arikushi, with their blooms of rich pigment, look like abstract paintings. These panels are never made available to the public. They are normally destroyed because they are seen as a means to art, but not as art in themselves. Their inclusion is like the magician revealing her tricks. Except there is no disappointment here. The craft behind the art has its own beauty. Seeing the amount of skilled work that goes into the finished prints will be a revelation for many. As Mary Pratt approaches her seventieth year, she continues to both surprise and make us feel right at home.

David Garneau

NEW YORK

Whitney Museum of American Art
ANA MENDIETA: EARTH BODY,
SCULPTURE AND PERFORMANCE
1972-1985

July 1 - Sept. 9th

Washington DC
HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND
SCULPTURE GARDEN


Oct. 14 - Jan. 2, 2005

A pioneer of art that identifies femininity with the earth, Ana Mendieta has finally acquired the mark of recognition that she deserves with this major retrospective by the Whitney. This show particularly establishes the links between Mendieta's sculpture and performance art. Comparisons are drawn between her art and that of many early women artists who later received recognition such as Marina Abramovic, Carolee Schneeman, Rebecca Horn, and others were, Mendieta developed her own language that had as much to do with the female body as it did to do with Mother Earth. As witnessed in this remarkable exhibition – identifying with the earth as both material and medium offers up an infinite and variable potential to the contemporary artist.

Prior to her untimely death Ana Mendieta, a Cuban-American exile used her body to create images in the landscape that identified with nature's procreative energies. Her early performances like *Image from Yaguj* (1973) seem to owe some debt to Frida Kahlo but it has been said she drew on Afro-Cuban and Taino (Amerindian) ritual traditions, reinterpreting them and rephrasing their original meaning to reflect her own vision. The *Siluetas* series involved silhouettes of her own body. The forms



Untitled (Body Tracks)
Ana Mendieta, 1974
Lifetime color photograph
10 x 8 inches (25.4 x 20.3 cm)
Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection
courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York,
© Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection



Anima, Silueta de Cohetes
(Anima, Silhouette of Fi)
Ana Mendieta, 1976
35 mm color slide documenting
time-based action.
Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection
courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York,
© Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection.
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suggest an intense union with nature. Her neo-primitive fecund symbols of fertility goddesses carved into the soft limestone and caves of Jaruco, a mountainous region of Cuba look like the traces of some ancient tribal or ancestral culture but were actually her own. The tiny delicate forms she painted on leaves are likewise made to look like goddess forms seen in ancient cultures. They were as ephemeral as life itself.

What stands out even more are Mendieta's vital and sinuous line drawings and ink on paper sketches, more lively than the dried mud forms, and installation works. While the Iowa period 1970 to 1980 included performance work, this period of experimentation enabled Mendieta to develop her artistic language and confidence. The Mexican works from 1973 and 1974 seem more far reaching, capture that sometimes violent, other times sensitive character of life's cycle. Her body rituals used blood, flowers, grasses and are very sensitive to the life process. Other seldom seen works in this show include the elegant *Totem Pole* series (1984-85) and *Untitled* carved tree slabs. The former capture silhouettes of the human form using gunpowder, while the latter repeat naturalistic leaf, female, and tree shapes in the same manner. Ana Mendieta's understanding that identity is linked to nature and the body, that we ourselves are a part of nature, and that nature is a life giving force was continuously apparent. Ana Mendieta was a rare visionary with a contemporary sense of the ancient. As this major retrospective evidences Mendieta seemed to be in a dialogue with the ancients.

John K. Grande

MEXIQUE

DAVID SORENSEN:
HORIZON SERIES

Sept. 11 to Oct. 6th
Galeria Vertice
Lerdo de Tejada 2418
Tel.: 6160078/6150742

Guanajuato, Mexico
Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato

Light and colour again become central to David Sorensen's latest series of paintings. These works are simultaneously a return to a formal geometry and compositional concern, and yet they are likewise more evolved and often work on and with a horizon line. They can be read as abstract landscapes or alternatively as abstract formal compositions. There is a play with dark linear meeting points between the colours and textures, and an emphatic use of brushwork in the sky areas. A certain density and structure in the overall composition reminds one of Nicholas de Stael but the colours are warm and southern. It also creates a sense that these are not purely static formal exercises, but that there is a broader open sense of gesture. Artists that come to mind as influences... Diebenkorn, Hoffman, and Rothko.



Orange H.S. No. 10, 2004
Oil on canvas 100 x 100 cm
Photo credit: Carlos Diaz Corona

Sorensen believes in the act of art. These paintings witness his gradual opening up to new horizons. The light, energy and colour of the Mexican landscape that he has visited in recent years inspires these new paintings. As Sorensen states, "In the present *Horizon series*, I am looking into a familiar energy and space, in someways related to postmodern installation works like those of James Turrell and Olafur Eliasson. Without

abandoning painting or nature, I am hopefully accessing states of mind of some inner substance and reward. Most of this series has been painted in Mexico. To me there is still this celebration worth the paint and it's about an open door in the artist that used to be called the muse."

John K. Grande

MONTREAL

MANUFACTURED LANDSCAPES:
THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF EDWARD BURTYSKY

Musée d'art contemporain
de Montréal
October 8t – January 9, 2005.

Along with Mark Ruwedel and Robert Smithson, Burtynsky's recent photographs were part of a show whose thematic was Industry and Entropy at the Freedman Gallery of the Albright College Center for the Arts in 2003. The exhibition, already seen at the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario will stop at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal. It will then be exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum in New York September 23 and continues until December 11th, 2005.

Toronto-based photographic artist Edward Burtynsky (b. 1955) is the Founder and president of Toronto Image Works, a landmark photographic/digital lab and technical education facility. Mr. Burtynsky is involved with the executive advisory board for Contact, Canada's largest annual photo festival.

Burtynsky's large format colour photographs of man-altered landscapes have been exhibited at numerous public venues including The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Albright Knox Gallery, New York, LA County Museum of Art, California, The Art Gallery of Ontario, The McMichael Canadian Collection and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. His images have appeared various periodicals, among them: Art in America, Art News, The Smithsonian, Harper's Magazine, Flash Art, Blind Spot, Art Forum, Saturday Night and Canadian Art.

His prints are housed in corporate and private collections worldwide and are included in these public collections: The National Gallery of Canada and The National Archives of Canada in Ottawa, The Museum of

Modern Art, New York, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., The Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Edward Burtynsky is represented by Mira Godard in Toronto, Paul Kuhn, Calgary, Charles Cowles, New York, Robert Koch in San Francisco and Flowers East in London, England.



Oxford Tire Pile #1, Westley, California
1999 Dye-coupler print
40 x 50 inches

SOME WORDS:

JG: A stunning series you have done that is likewise sculptural is your *Densified Scrap Metal* photos from Hamilton, Ontario. We are looking at compacted cubes of metal, but they are so varied and colorful, your photos capture the art in the everyday like abstract expressionism meets the ready-made. This is conceptual sculpture made with entropy built into it.

EB: When I first began the series it was more like a pure documentary project, but as I worked through the process, I noticed that at certain distances, the object's usage remained apparent, an oil drum or a filter... yet it also resonated with an abstract quality that made an intriguing visual statement as well, without losing site of its origins.

JG: There is an irony to the *Ship-breaking* series, the *Mine sites*, and the *Densified Scrap Metal* series that is interesting for its duality. You are dealing with various aspects of a highly evolved consumer society, where economies of scale work at both ends of the spectrum – production and detritus.

EB: Definitely there is a sense of irony. I am interested in rethinking notions of the sublime in contemporary aesthetics, whereas in the history of art, the sublime used to be associated with nature.