

**Jerome Andrews: *Surreal Shorelines***  
**Citadel Gallery, October 17 - November 17, 2008**

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Volume 52, Number 213, Supplement, Winter 2008–2009

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/62118ac>

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Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

0042-5435 (print)

1923-3183 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Beaman, L. (2008). Jerome Andrews: *Surreal Shorelines* / Citadel Gallery, October 17 - November 17, 2008. *Vie des Arts*, 52(213), 15–15.

SAINT JOHN, NB

# JEROME ANDREWS: SURREAL SHORELINES

Lori Beaman

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October 17–November 17, 2008

There is something interesting happening in the artistic community in Saint John, New Brunswick. Every couple of months, 10 or so of the city's galleries—ranging from the New Brunswick Museum to smaller commercial and alternative galleries—work together to organize time sequenced openings on the same day, what they call a "gallery hop". This strategy has worked to create a buzz around the art scene in Saint John, complete with throngs of people moving from gallery to gallery and some terrific cross dialogue between artists and the public. For a small city, creating a functioning art scene is not always an easy task, but it's happening in Saint John.

Jerome Andrews' work is featured by Citadel Gallery in the most recent gallery hop. Andrews, a member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, is a mid-career artist who is best known for his watercolours, of which there are three in this show of 19 works. The three watercolours fore-

shadow the other works in the exhibition, which features Andrews recent foray into the medium of acrylics and which he paints with the same bold approach as he uses in his watercolours. If you think of benign, pretty execution when you think of watercolour, think again. This work is complex, layered, and combines a serious treatment of both fear and humour in a style that is predominantly surrealist. The ocean and the shoreline, with its myriad of moods and perpetual surprises (whether pleasant or not), is almost always part of Andrews' work. There is a fun, humorous side to this work juxtapositioned with a dark, ominous tone that plays on the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest in a predatory world, a contrast which creates an emotional depth to this work.

In the *Surreal Shorelines* series of 5 paintings (which form the core of the exhibition), blues, purples and greens have a vibrancy and depth so palpable one can scarcely resist the urge to engage with the works in a tactile as well as emotional manner. These paintings are not the private exoticism and eroticism of the surrealism of Salvador Dali, for example. If magic realism as a literary approach



*Nuns in Eden*  
Acrylic on masonite  
24 in. x 16 in.  
Photograph: Derek Mac Donald

were to be reflected in images, Andrews' work captures it beautifully. As in magic realism, there is a sense in which the impossible becomes a shared perception by both viewer and the artist. The journey is a shared one, not an exclusionary self-absorbed presentation which is so often the case with surreal representations. Andrews' works draw the viewer in, with layers of detail that only gradually emerge, and transport us on a journey of which we are almost unaware until we step away from the work and feel the impact of withdrawal.

Doing "darkness", both in tone and emotion, is difficult to accomplish in painting but

Andrews demonstrates his skill at it in this exhibition. *Summer Cottage* draws the viewer in with its vibrant night-time blue. The shore is highlighted with a single line etched in the paint, the water is calm and invites quiet contemplation. But then the adventure begins, for the viewer gradually accustoms her eyes to the darkness, and the tension begins to build. There is an anticipatory anxiety that pulls the viewer into the story of the painting, the ending of which is left untold and to the imagination. The haunting sparseness of the image leaves the possibilities wide open.

Surrealism still has something to say, and if there was need of proof this exhibition is it. □