James Barry’s *The Death of General Wolfe* has been in the collection of the New Brunswick Museum since 1928, but it has never been displayed before at the museum’s Market Square location. This installation also marks the painting’s return to Saint John after a three year hiatus at the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI). The results of this restoration are spectacular. The painting looks as if it was completed yesterday. No one is really sure of the exact date the painting was completed, but it was first publicly shown at Royal Academy exhibition in 1776, where it was the subject of some controversy. The Irish born James Barry saw himself as a worthy competitor to his more famous colleague, the American born Benjamin West. Both were working in London at the end of the 18th century. West had shown his version, now in the National Gallery of Canada, of the famous event at the Academy’s 1770 exhibition to much critical acclaim. Barry thought that his painting would promote similar results. Alas, it was not to be and therein is the interesting story of this painting and why this installation is well worth a visit.

James Barry’s painting was to be more historically correct than West’s work. So he went to some pains to study the records of the 1759 battle of the events around General Wolfe’s death. The problem was that the public wanted their heroic events to be heroic. West’s painting was already considered in contemporary dress rather than classical garb which had been the norm until then. Heroic warriors still need to be shown dying heroes.

It mattered little if some of these works were actually present at the event as they were in the West painting which depicts several of the general’s subordinates in the scene. Barry’s painting stayed close to the true event. It is far less crowded than West’s but the realism held little appeal and the disappointed Irish painter never exhibited again at the Royal Academy and his painting slipped into obscurity.

The central question is whether Barry’s painting is an equal to West’s more famous work. In a word. No. West was a better painter and his *The Death of General Wolfe* a better painting. Barry’s painting is very good in the same way that Antonio Salieri’s music is very good, but it was not as good as Mozart’s. There are times, however, when I enjoy listening to Salieri and I certainly think that Barry’s *The Death of General Wolfe* is worth viewing and, in particular, because of the way that it is placed in context in this installation. Surrounding Barry’s paintings are a number of other works relating to the General Wolfe portrait. They include two small and interesting copies of West’s masterpiece by unknown artists, one painted on metal, the other on canvas. They provide a way of comparing West’s and Barry’s pictures. West puts the paint down in a manner very much like Barry. Of course, one could only truly judge which painting was better if they were exhibited side by side. This was done a couple of years ago at the National Gallery of Canada in an exhibition titled *The Many Deaths of General Wolfe*.

The Saint John exhibition also includes a small study of the head of General Wolfe by the 18th century British artist, George Romney. The study was made for a now lost version of the death of Wolfe by Romney, an equal, if not a better, painter than West. There is also a Wedgwood jug (ca.1778) decorated with a transfer print of General Wolfe’s death on display. The jug demonstrates the popularity of this theme with the general public at the time; as does a satirical engraving based on West’s painting by the caricaturist James Gillray – *The Death of the Great Wolf* (1795). The engraving depicts then prime minister William Pitt the Younger surrounded by his party colleagues dying on the battlefield of politics. The entire exhibition is from the New Brunswick Museum’s *Webster Canadiana Collection* put together by museum founder Dr. John C. Webster (1863-1950) and donated in 1954. Dr. Webster actually traced the whereabouts of the James Barry painting and bought it for his own collection, a story elaborated on at the museum’s website. A finely curated exhibition, and well worth a look!

Virgil Hammock
Curated by Marcus Macdonald, this departure into outsider art marks a new direction that contrasts the tenderness that appears to remove itself from pretension yet remains inevitably linked to academic trapping. Like other great discoveries such as the former slave and black artist Bill Traylor, these two men live(d) their art without tipping a hat to anyone other than creativity itself. This exhibition is refreshing for its sincere homage to these truly folk art heroes.

Sorgente’s selection includes glass head-encrusted statuettes of the Madonna. The outer look of these statues is of a shimmering and hallucinatory Catholic imagism. Felt conical hats encrusted with a rosemary necklaces, and many objects of veneration, reveal an artist on the fringes of kitsch sentimentality. Despite this, Sorgente remains grounded in the ultra serious messagery of Christ and the Catholic church. These works are so kitsch they might have inspired Lisa Neigh­ bor to integrate them into the illuminated neon heralry she is known for. Stu a healthy eighty-five years old, Papa Palmerino Sorgente has risen to the occasion of recovering from a devastating fire in December 2006 that claimed most of his life’s artwork. Considered by many to be a latter day saint, Sorgente has come through the debacle with flying colours, and an astonishing vitality. fact of his many talents) gently caressing while one peruses the bio­historical documents of The Great Antonio’s life. Photos from the 1950s depict him as a pro wrestler, and there are even early photos of Antonio in his native Yugoslavia. Other photos are of photo ops with celebrities and politicians. They line the walls, testament to The Great Antonio’s life. Of particular interest are his numerous collages and postcards, and these recall the glory days of the 1960s. One show The Great Antonio pulling STCUM buses down Saint Catherine Street. These visual creations are funny, well com­posed and are works of art in their own right. The postcards started in 1972, and up until his recent passing away, The Great Antonio could be found on the streets of Montreal distributing them to passers-by. He was allowed to ride the metro for free, acting as an ambassador for the STCUM. Starting out as a stevedore in the Old Port of Montreal, Antonio’s reputation as a modern-day Hercules grew in direct proportion to his appetite for fame.

The Great Antonio was a colossus of Everywhere who managed to win the hearts and minds of a turbulent patch of time, of wrestling fans and culturati alike. This show reveals how important it is for custodians of culture to preserve the legends of Montreal, long after the public has ceased to pay attention to them. An excellent tribute to two respectively prodigious artists. Elliott Augustine

If Sorgente’s muse has been electrified Catholic signs and sym­ bols, then The Great Antonio, with recently passed away in early September, might be regarded as being a muse unto himself. Heaven was his roth, and his dium, as it were. Upon entering into the gallery, the lovely operatic voice of Antonio serenades from the ceiling (an arti-

**ERLING VALTRYSON: SILENCE AND SERENITY**

Galerie d’art Suzanne Baron-Lafrenière
October 1 – November 15, 2003
Tel.: 514-486-6634

Norwegian printmaking has a long and illustrious history. The woodcuts of Edvard Munch were re­plete with imagery of the landscape, sometimes with hard, beautiful women or could they be goddesses? From Bergen on Norway’s west­ coast Erling Valtryson is another kind of printmaker, but equally accomplished, and contrary to Munch’s angst and guilt ridden sturm und drang, his mezzotints have a serenity and composition that feels timeless. Over the years, Valtryson has acquired a significant reputation for his mezzotints, to the extent that he exhibits regularly in Japan and is highly regarded there.

Valtryson’s mezzotint technique requires him to “rock the plate” manually for up to five hours a day, and for large plate images he has worked for up to 50 hours on a single image. The rocking process achieves a deep black density whereby an equivalent mechanical process would lack something of the rhythmic intensity. The mystical quality of these still life mezzotints on view can include bizarre conjoin­ tions of objects, a clothes peg, an­ tique tea cup, wine glass, and eye glasses, all in the same composition.

Like a museum of memory, Val­ tryson works on our perception of a form or formal grouping in a composition using his mastery of chiaroscuro (light-dark contrast) to develop an intense image. A wrapped asparagus becomes almost a ritual object with his treatment. While Valtryson earlier in his career worked on abstract forms, he has developed a kind of magic figura­tion, where hyper real elements are juxtaposed in bizarre, often surreal combinations. These immaculately executed prints can be border­ line macabre, as with Like an Angel (2002). Here, a partially bandaged hatted figure is curiously framed by abstract architectures. The dynastic aura is medi­eval and cloistered.

Though these mezzotints are clichés, they exploit the ordinary in an unusual way and in a unique medium Picnic in Moonlight (2002) has a cat who stares amid stones while a typical nordic landscape worthy of Munch or Christian Krogh resonates behind this. It is Valtryson’s second show at Galerie Suzanne Baron-Lafreniere. While these works can have a quietude and stillness that can be unsettling, others, like Sleep (2002) with its hybrid hibernating chameleon/ seahorse and streaking comet in an eternal sepia sky – are sincerely poetic and evocative.

John K. Grande

**DONNA SHVIL LIGHT FALLS**

Donna Shvil at Galerie de Bellefeuille
1367 avenue Greene
Tel: (514) 933-4606
www.debelleville.com

_A portrait is a picture of a person with something wrong with the mouth._

(John Singer Sargent)

It is not by chance that a quote from a great American portraitist opens this review. Both, his work and his art resonate through the works of Donna Shvil on view at Galerie de Bellefeuille.

Her almost entirely monochro­ matic paintings focus not so much on the human figure, as on the play of light and shadow. Her models are but a pretext for the exploration of this ethereal universe, and the dialogue of two opposing and opposite worlds, those of darkness and light.

With a title as nuanced as Blur, the portrait of a woman, her face half-hidden in the shadows, is a masterfully accomplished exercise in capturing the elusive quality of light, whether reflected from the hand the model holds in her face, or filtering through murky curtains in the background. The composition is grounded by grid of the window frame, its shadow dancing on the textured fabric.

This geometric accent takes centre stage in a work titled The Glass House; Prism, in which verti­ cal strips of light change hue turn-
Noreen Mallory has been fascinated by herons since her childhood in Brockville in eastern Ontario. The Great Blue heron has traditionally migrated and stopped over in the nearby marsh areas of the Rideau Lakes region. The present exhibition is an homage to the life of the heron species. In After Hard Winter I, Mallory depicts a heron nest damaged by the ice storm using the combined media of charcoal, wash and white pastel. The work has a plywood element that furthers the inherent material contrasts. It is Mallory's ability to combine media, even recycle earlier printwork, that adds to their visual and textural richness.

One of Mallory’s environmentally sensitive mixed media paintings depicts a series of heron nests atop a forest of dead trees in a marsh area near Brockville. She has made aware that this is a sophisticated community of birds. This image of the collective architecture of birds’ nests set atop treetops above a swamp in the chaos of nature, is interesting. Mallory’s art seems to communicate a simple message, that we can share the life we experience on the earth with other species, and that the sharing can add a healthy dimension to the life experience. There is an aura of exotic unreality to Heronry and Beaver House II. It integrates the semi-circular image of a beaver hut with that of a heron’s nest on a tree top. The notion of shared habitat, of creatures living in direct contact with one another, is enhanced by Mallory’s integration of innovative collage techniques. All manner of materials, and lengthy shreds of paper, textured and coloured, further the sense that this is a real scene of animal and bird life in the landscape.

In Setting Out, we can almost feel the flutter of bird’s wings through a path made by frozen water between the reeds and bulrushes. Mallory has layered a series of real paper layers that create the sensation of actual landscape topography. The elongated grey curve above hovers in space, the way heron’s do when they fly, but this image of the heron in flight amid light and space is abstract.

There is a feeling of solemnity and solitude, but not of isolation, in some of these artworks that brings to mind Emily Carr’s forest interior or coastal scenes of British Columbia. Sometimes watercolour fragments or sections are fixed onto plywood, a technique that makes the landscape scenes feel “real”. As Noreen Mallory says: “I became fascinated in the ‘70s by a heronry among my accustomed walking route in eastern Ontario. Returning repeatedly for more than thirty years, I have watched the drama of heron family life played out against the variations in light and colour of the seasons, altering almost by the hour as the sun movers and the weather changes through both the day and the night...”

The exhibition also includes Shvil’s signature Brugmansia flowers, their wilting petals turning an unusual red, almost flesh-like colour. Fascinated by the 24 hour life span of these tropical organisms, she focuses on their anthropomorphic characteristics without ever losing her painterly touch and these unusual portraits have the feel of an old master’s painting.

Dorota Kozinska

NOREEN MALLORY: HERONRY
Oct. 15th – Nov. 8th, 2003
Art en majuscule
950 rue Ottawa
Tel.: 514-879-1117

December, 2003
Espace 3
Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts
5170 ch. de la Cote Ste. Catherine
www.saidyebbronman.org

The Glass House: Plorn, 2003
Acrylique sur panneau
61 x 172,5 cm

THE GLASS HOUSE
ANDRÉ BIÉLER:
DRAUGHTSMAN & PRINTMAKER

Agnes Etherington Gallery
Nov. 2 – Jan 18th, 2003
Tel.: 613-533-2190
www.queensu.ca/ageeth

Organized by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and highlighting that museum’s incredibly broad range of works of paper by André Biéler (and donated by Biéler’s family) this show now visits the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, a place Biéler helped found when he was artist-in-residence at Queen’s University (1936-1964). The Swiss-born Biéler was charismatic and an enlightened teacher who founded the Queen’s University Art Department.

This show highlights many seldom seen aspects of Biéler’s oeuvre. We see social and humanistic scenes and studies for the Shipshaw mural (1945) commissioned by ALCAN in the Saguenay. After Mass (1939) and The Embarcation (1945) are typically generous in their depiction of the human condition. Biéler was a master of the Canadian scene and he popularized, even "Europeanized" the Canadian landscape. La Chapelle de Sainte-Famille, Île d’Orléans (1928)

KINGSTON
typhifies Biéler’s ingenious woodcut style, with its then very modern incorporation of pochoir and gouache. The sweeps of lines, mass and colour recall the work of Paul Séries and Maurice Denis with whom Biéler studied in Paris. Biéler’s fluid charcoal, watercolour and woodblock style was colourful and brought warmth to the Canadian landscape idiom.

John K. Grande

TORONTO

FILLING THE GAP: CO-OP GALLERIES IN ONTARIO

AWOL Gallery & Studios
76 Ossington Ave.
Toronto M6J 1J5
Tel.: 416-516-2581
www.awolgallery.com

Galerie 1313
1313 Queen St. W.
Toronto M6J 2Y7
Tel.: 416-536-6778
www.g1313.org

Loop
1374 Queen St. W.
Toronto M6J 1S1
Tel.: 416-516-2581
www.loopgallery.ca

Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts
984 Queen St. W.
Toronto M5J 1H1
Tel.: 416-504-7142
www.propeller.ca

Ottawa Co-op
Enriched Bread Artists (EBA)
951 Gladstone Ave.
Ottawa K1Y 3E5
Tel.: 613-729-7632

their mandate is non-commercial. So the co-operative galleries fill a much needed gap for artists and public alike. The missing ingredient in government funded galleries is spontaneity and the calendar scheduled show can be its greatest hindrance. The oldest Toronto co-operative gallery is Mercer Union which has been around for over 23 years. A danger with any institution whether commercial, governmental or independent co-op is that the shows and artists can be predictable.

The current show at Propeller boasts a range of artists, including rammed earth sculptures by Lois Dellert. Using nature-based materials to build formal geometric sculptures, Dellert has modernist architecture in mind, but these skyscrapers are nature-based and have colourful geo-layerings. Fogo Island, a small community of 250 people off the Newfoundland coast inspired Frances Key. Her series of polaroids with watercolour pencil additions evoke a quality of past memory. This museum of memory can be vertically arranged as with a triptych of polaroids, or can include a 3-D ladder and small scale painting. "Atlantis," Susan Lukachko’s mixed media on mylar innovation investigate the suburban lawn. Photo of grass close-up become the subject for further glue and graphite additions. Inspired by Robert Flaherty’s Man of Aran documentary film about Ivis Mor in which an Irish family struggles to survive on a wild island, Kathy Goldman’s photographs present the exquisitely detailed hand built stonewalls on one of the Aran Islands, off the West Coast of Ireland. The next exhibition at Propeller features Ian Reveall’s ephemeral and evocative C-Print photos of clouds from November 5th to 16th.

Located in the Queen West Gallery District, AWOL provides a unique environment of gallery show space and shared studio settings. One can feel the creative and open atmosphere while visiting and talking with some of the artists. Their innovative contemporary art ranges from abstract to realism, and photography to sculpture. AWOL was founded in 1999 by a group of artists who had left Propeller; the seven founders include Dale Thompson, Ross Bonfantil and Sandra Tarantino. This artist-run co-operative space is operated like a business. There have been large group shows that have included non-member outsider artists. As Ross Bonfantil answered when I asked him about AWOL’s future: "We are starting to become more established. We have taken five years working at it. We are serious about putting on shows and we work hard. The large exhibitions are organized outside the gallery as umbrella

Light into the Myth
Helena Kwon
Nov. 19-30, 2003

In response to a lack of place for younger artists in parallel government funded galleries a hybrid part-commercial and part collective gallery has evolved in major urban centres. The response of artist members can be part aesthetic and part-marginal in terms of the kind of art they exhibit. One such Toronto co-op is Propeller located on the popular gallery infested Queen St. West strip. Propeller is a modest space run by a collaborative group of artists. Each artist member contributes rent to the gallery monthly and likewise has the right to exhibit. The artists are given a roster for exhibitions and can present whatever medium or kind of art they decide to. There is less of the filtration of ideas and aesthetics seen by the "official" parallel government funded galleries.

One wonders whether there is a certain kind of self censorship and politically correct bias inherent to government funded galleries, even if
events that extend our relations out into the community. Our gallery is the least expensive for co-operatives in the Queen St. West district.” Upcoming AWOL shows: Justyna Dunal (Nov. 29 - Dec. 7) and Summi Jung (Dec. 11 to 24, 2003)

Co-operative galleries are more organic at their best, like a family. If well run they can inspire and generate new energy in the artistic community. If not, they tend to be ingrown and lack any public attraction. The best comparison is with the music industry where independent labels can work, or alternatively fail. The rest, as the saying goes, is up to the individual. Gallery 1313 is located in the heart of Parkdale, a community with a rich history, a diverse population and an active arts focus. Once a bedroom suburb of Toronto, Parkdale has had a troubled transitional history but now it is becoming a hip neighborhood. The Gallery opened its doors in January of 1998 and became the new home of the Parkdale Village Arts Collective, a group of 80 artists from across the GTA practicing a wide range of artistic practices. Gallery 1313 hosts about 22 exhibitions a year in the main gallery and another 20 in the members or Cell Gallery. A third gallery exhibiting video and smaller art installation and smaller exhibitions. The Gallery receives submissions for exhibitions from across Canada and overseas. Korean artist Helena Kwon will be exhibiting light box, photo and painted work at 1313 in November.

Loop Gallery located nearby at 1174 Queen St. West is another such co-operative gallery. While the actual space is quite small like AWOL, it is accessible and the public is not intimidated to enter as is so often the case with “official” contemporary public galleries like Power Plant. A diverse range of shows are presented at Loop including Maria Gabankova: New Paintings (to Oct. 19) Lorrie Towes: Recent Work (Oct. 25 to Nov. 19) and Milhios Legrady from Nov. 20 - 30. There is also a comic book launch at the space for Conundrum Press’s Contemporary Canadian Narrative Art on Friday November 21st.

Ottawa also has an artist’s co-operative called EBA (Enriched Bread Consisting of 23 core artists, the co-operative has studios on two floors of the building and all spaces are occupied. The EBA merges the meaning of art and bread each year with an open studio in October (the same date the Standard Bread Company originally made its first bread there in 1924). For their events the EBA does have commercial sponsors who provide some financial support and services. This co-operative is a resounding success and a community within and unto itself. The idea and creative exchange going on there continues through the years and evolves. The EBA co-operative is a vital forum in the Ottawa community for artists and the arts.

**BILL BURSTON:**

**GRIDLOCK**

Engine Gallery

1112 Queen St. W.

Tel: 416-531-9905

enginegallery@rogers.com

Burston generates an astonishing number of variations on the grid with surface textures to die for. Burston’s art can be sensuous, and can call to mind Man Ray’s experiments with rayograms. The grey graphite textures are like memory passages from early black and white films, and the abstract surface patterns and light dark contrasts likewise recall the days of early cinema and constructivist photography. The difference is these forms are more physical and tangible. Analogues have been made to organic forms, or even fractals, but all these cogs, wheels, and solitary or overlapping grid structures challenge our eye on a purely perceptual level. Graphite and a tangible graphic sense make these artworks very Burston-esque!

John K. Grande

**DEGAS SCULPTURES**

Art Gallery of Ontario

Oct. 11, 2003 - Jan. 4, 2004

327 Dundas St. W.

Toronto M5T 1G4

www.ago.net

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar De Gas (1834-1917), or Degas as he is better known, was an Impressionist and keen observer of Paris society and life. His pastel and oil sketches of ballerinas, dancers, musicians and café-goers celebrated 19th century Paris society and everyday life with an intimacy and keen sense of the observed moment. While Edouard de Goncourt once called him “the painter of laundry women and ballet girls” Degas’ sculpture is less well known. He exhibited just one wax sculpture in his life, titled Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen, at the 6th Impressionist show in 1881. Critics of the era considered the sculpture to be vulgar and “low”. Like Dammert and Renoir, Degas chose to sculpt later in life to achieve a greater “realism” in three dimensions.

Using the same models as in his paintings, Degas made wax models of horses, dancers, and nudes. The realism he sought was furthered by the use of actual cloth material for the sculpted dancer’s corset and
ballet skirt in Young Dancer (1888). Presenting 73 posthumously produced casts after Degas' wax sketches from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek Collection in Copenhagen, the Art Gallery of Ontario offers us a welcome survey of Degas' work - the Art Gallery of Ontario offers us a glimpse of the Glyptotek Collection in Copenhagen, ca. 1883-1888, cast between 1883-1888, cast between 1919-1927 bronze / 95.0 x 75.0 x 26.0 cm Collection of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen © 2003 Photograph Ole Haupt, Courtesy International Arts, Memphis

ROB BLOORE: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME
The Art Company Oct. 15 - November 2, 2003
744 Queen St. W.
Tel: 416-864-9009

Ron Bloore on Spadina in Toronto

Frosty aesthetic or colourful curmudgeon? Whether you think of Ron Bloore as coldly intellectual or boldly innovative, he has been a fixture in the Canadian arts scene forever it seems. Bloore's best known "white on white" paintings are tight, well orchestrated explorations in structural innovation and surface treatment (a few of these gems are in this show). There are seldom seen maquettes and ideational wall sketches, even a series of small scale spoon-shaped sculptures a.k.a. "sploores" that recall primitive African carving here. Hieratic and symbolic, confabulated exercises in pragmatic design, these "sploores" are Bloore generated, and demonstrate that Bloore's art is anything but cold - more like intellectually challenging, as opposed to challenged!

Les not forget that early on Ron Bloore even painted an Homage to Duchamp. The colourful interplay between form and function in the wall placed pieces here make them the spatial and temporal exercises of an artist who uses symbol as cue. The hieratic symbolism becomes a device to develop a dialogue on abstraction, but an abstraction with a sense of history (Moore trained as an archaeologist before deciding to become an artist). We see bright geometric colour backgrounds painted directly on the gallery walls, and three-dimensional wood cut-outs hovering over the surface. These works are classic in spite of the improvisational assemblage technique. This selection of four decades of Ron Bloore's art is very fine, and with a home built sense of humour. The structural interplay is playful, with a sense of identity. There is a sense of the relativity inherent to forms whether in or on space, and whether white on white or as form on colour. What a colourist!! Thanks to Art Exchange Director Robert Steinbach for producing such an enlightened show.

John K. Grande

STEPHEN LACK: PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS + PROTOTYPES
Nov. 1 - 22, 2003
Gallery One
121 Scollard St.
www.galleryone.ca

There is less of the media culture derived source material in Stephen Lack's latest show at Gallery One. The surprises include a series of primed and sealed plaster car sculptures. These are prototypes Lack calls "Lacks". Amorphous, these Porsche-like objects have a sexy feel, but mounted on rigid steel structures, they look like design prototypes for display. This blurring of the line between art and design makes these predictable sculptures a counter-point with the tiny window - which is suggestive of containment or imprisonment. Boy at the Lake (2003) shows youth 1960s style. A paintings like this begs the question: How innocent can Americans really be after all they have been through with 911 and the 2nd Iraq War? Another question Stephen Lack's curious painterly scenarios entertain: What will Americans do with all that lost innocence? Maybe just re-invent it and market it all over again!

John K. Grande

Red and Black G7, 2003 each sculpture 15.8 x 3.2 inches

The cars Lack waxes into acrylic on canvas paintings or presents on steel display structures re-present the American Dream types: torso, hybrids, or simple straight Cadillacs, Ferraris... These Dream Symbols are liberated from the real thing. Media neurosis, it seems, has been institutionalized in America's mind-scape.

The paintings Lack excels in are portraits of suburban pre- or after-life, painted with that dull video or TV glow (a hallmark or key to Lack's best work). Monk's Daughter (2003) is one of the best. A young girl in a blue dress stands on a front lawn, seemingly abandoned or alone while the parents are elsewhere. The gloomy sky and the life-less lawn, both conspire to make this a portrait of impending or implicit doom. State of the World (2001) is an 8 panel extravaganza. The same image is in each of the panels, just the hue changes... like dialing up your favourite colour combination, the way people mix and master colour imagery on a computer. Porsche on Steel (2003) is a sharp horizontal piece - a sports car to the left and a tiny yellow-orange window to the right. The car - a freedom symbol - builds...
Daring Confessions features work: Romance and the Modern-Day Girl

Mendel Art Gallery
Sept. 12 to Nov. 16

Is Horowitz being ironic or is she being sincere? Whichever, the work is bound to make anyone uncomfortable in just the right ways.

Robin Arsenault's Capsized is a theatrical installation featuring ten lumpen cloth heads with x's for eyes. There are nine in the audience. The tenth wears a dance cap on stage. A short script tells a tale that resembles the medieval morality poem, Ship of Fools. It seems to be about the inevitability of humiliation and loss, especially around issues of love. I want to read into this piece a theme that seems to extend throughout the show: despite our best wishes and fine minds we are all made fools by our emotions, by others, and especially by our attachment to anything in the world. Interestingly, none of the works in Daring Confession display any possibility of there being positive and equitable relationships. Perhaps happiness makes for dull art.

David Garneau

I blushed more than once while walking through Daring Confessions: Romance and the Modern-Day Girl. Tetyana Gershuni's luscious painting of hypertrophic chichen parts arranged with robust gynecological intent did it. Calculating how often Risa Horowitz had bowel movements and orgasms during her thirtieth year also warmed my cheek. Curated by Alexandra Stratilat for the Mendel Art Gallery, Daring Confessions features work by Robin Arsenault, (Calgary), Lissa Robinson (Calgary), Tetyana Gershuni (Saskatoon/Kiev, Ukraine), Andrea Cooper (St. John's), Risa Horowitz (Winnipeg), and Eliza Griffiths (Ottawa). All these artists are women in their late twenties and thirties considering the place of romance in our feminist, and not, era. For every satirical jab at the absurdity of the social constructions of romance, there are heart-aching evocations of unrequited desire and passionate confusion.

Tetyana Gershuni's Delicateessen, is a corpulent, seductive painting offering a queasy comparison between female genitalia and a grocery chichen. The deadpan joke sticks in my cheek. Curated by Alexandra Stratilat for the Mendel Art Gallery, Daring Confessions features work by Robin Arsenault, (Calgary), Lissa Robinson (Calgary), Tetyana Gershuni (Saskatoon/Kiev, Ukraine), Andrea Cooper (St. John's), Risa Horowitz (Winnipeg), and Eliza Griffiths (Ottawa). All these artists are women in their late twenties and thirties considering the place of romance in our feminist, and not, era. For every satirical jab at the absurdity of the social constructions of romance, there are heart-aching evocations of unrequited desire and passionate confusion.

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Jean-Paul Riopelle

622 Richmond Street West, Toronto
Ontario M5V 1Y9
Tel.: (416) 504-5445
Fax: (416) 504-5446

Membre de l’Association Professionnelle des Galeries d’Art du Canada

metaphor for an almost too stereotypical western Canadian culture. Introduced as a counterpoint in the centre screen is an image of the artist projected onto an early 20th century watercolour landscape. The question remains...How much do so-called old Canadians actually relate to these conservative stereotypes? Is Jin-me Yoon’s artform a conservative rephrasing of colonial and post-colonial history? How much is the new Canadian manipulated by curators and art gallery directors for ulterior motives?

Truly fascinating are the underwater films titled Memorial Project Vietnam (2001, 2003) by Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba. These films are a reconciliation in the artist’s mind for the great tragedy of Vietnam’s boat people many of whom died at sea in search of a new life. In the video we see cyclo-drivers struggling to move their bicycle transport along the Indochina sea bed. This common form of primitive transport/taxi is now being outmoded in Vietnam and so, the video becomes a symbol of loss of some intimate culture amid global era economic intervention in Vietnam’s history. We see these drivers rising to the surface for air, then re-descending to continue their struggle to cross this metaphoric, largely unseen underwater terrain.

Other artists include Fiona Tan whose fashionable double screen video captures the coming of age ceremony in Kyoto mixing a touristic, documentary and artistic style. Sharon Lockhart’s Teatro Amazonas (1999) documents Amazon kinship relations and presents a video that presents the audience as subject. They watch a film in a 19th century theatre in Manaus, Brazil and we watch them. A poignant commentary on changing cultural identity. Lockhart’s work re-phrases and re-interprets ethnography with a post-colonial sense of irony. The thrust of her work is fatalist and
does nothing to actually change the world she is pseudo-documenting.

At the risk of being called reactionary, the real installation work that uses materials, and creates actual forms, such the multi-media suitcases of Yin Xiuzhen, are truly fascinating. Yin Xiuzhen’s Portable City is sewn into a suitcase/These soft cuddly buildings are Claes Oldenberg-esque miniatures, memorials that are hand-crafted yet relate feelings of exile and nomadism common to new world migrants or immigrants with great sensitivity for that no-man’s land of displacement. The same goes for Do-Ho Suh whose camp-like tent structures were set up in a New York apartment (2000). Everything in the installation has an inflatable or reconstructed/deconstructed portable temporariness, evoking his Seoul family home and New York apartment... exciting!

All in all, this is an engaging and challenging show, part of one trend in contemporary art, struggling to recognize the hybridity and temporal nature of cultural life in a very politically predetermined global miasma.

John K. Grande