

## English

Volume 49, numéro 197, hiver 2004–2005

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/52665ac>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

### ISSN

0042-5435 (imprimé)

1923-3183 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer ce document

(2004). English. *Vie des arts*, 49(197), 90–95.

## SACKVILLE, NB

## WHITEFEATHER

## VISCERAL ARTEFACTS

Struts Gallery  
7 Lorne St.

November 12 - December 4, 2004

Weaver WhiteFeather is a Fredericton artist who uses, among other material, women's hair as fiber in work. The pieces in her exhibition in Sackville serve as powerful metaphors about what she terms "...a woman's physical place in society while, at the same time, beautiful objects on their own. I use the word beautiful guardedly because the artist is also a punster where the beauty of the objects when matched with their titles delivers a strong message. Take the work in progress, *Hair Net*, which is a fishing net now about ten foot across woven from human hair or, the even more bluntly titled, *Hair Pie*, is a pie stuffed with hair. If I did not know the titles, or the fact that they used human female hair as a medium, I could look at either of these works as purely interesting well crafted objects. Indeed the work are shown at the gallery without titles. But armed with the titles and a knowledge of materials they become something very different.

Some works, such as *Bloomers*, a pair of crocheted panties woven from hair, do not need titles to get the point. The whole concept of a hair shirt takes on a different meaning as well as a different context much less a different part of your body. Every time this piece comes to mind I get itchy. The strongest work in the exhibition is the triptych, *Matrimonial Bed Sheets*. This work consists of three aged linen sheets hung in an open box form. The sheets are bisected with a vulva like cuts with one complete with pubic hair. They bring to mind the idea of the marriage bed where, at one time, blood stained sheets were displayed following the marriage night as proof of the bride's virginity.

Whitefeather's art works are a very powerful statement about women and their place in society. The difficult part is placing them in a way that their message becomes clear to a wider audience. Art galleries, in particular artists run centres, such as Struts are not that

place. Artists run centres often preach to the converted and that is not to say that her exhibition was not attractively hung, or that the gallery does not attempt to reach out, only it would be better if this exhibition was in a place where a different group of people would see it and be effected by the artist's message. I am not sure where such a place might be. I was once in the public art gallery in Linz, Austria which is dead centre in a large shopping mall and features free admission which means that the shortest route from shop a to b might be through an art exhibition. This is in contrast to the new MOMA in New York with its \$20 admission. We really need to think about how to get strong art such as Whitefeather's to a larger audience.

I like this work because of its high level of craft combined with strong intellectual content. There is much to be said for the old McLuhan chestnut that the medium is the message. Whitefeather by using the materials that she does "the stuff of a woman's existence", gets her message across. The real stuff hair, clothes, bed sheet is, in this case, are stronger than a drawing, painting or photograph would be of the same objects. Of course, she transforms these object through her craft into something much more than they were when she started.

The last piece completed for this exhibition was a moving work in memory of her teacher and mentor the Fredericton artist Rick Burns who died the week of the exhibition's opening. Rick was on one of her teacher's at Craft College and it is obvious from this exhibition that he did a good job. She is now an instructor and studio technician at the college and I am sure that she will do Rick proud. I look forward to seeing more of Whitefeather's work in the future.

Virgil Hammock



A drawing from the installation *FREE*, 2004. Medium: pen on paper. Image courtesy of the artist.

## MONTREAL

## DAN ARMSTRONG SIX

## FREE

Galerie Optica  
Nov 5 - Dec 12  
# 508 - 372 St. Catherine W.  
Tel.: 514-874-1666  
www.optica.ca

Dan Armstrong Six is a Toronto based artist whose background consists of primarily installation work. For this show at Optica he has assembled a survey of his sculpture and drawings, and also showcases his recent foray into music with a video documenting his band, Les Sics (sic). The title of the show is *Free*. This is freedom with an extraordinary license to commit visually reckless mayhem. Known for a "take no prisoners" approach to the art of performance, Armstrong has used a garbage dumpster, concocting ingredients that simulate human and industrial waste products in a Armstrong's Vito Acconci-like performance that involved a walk through the Toronto streets leaving traces of detritus all over the place. Was this a statement about society's repressive and/or reactive attitude to the excrement and other distasteful effluvium?

With the same spirit of unpredictability, this show's amalgam of past work, music videos and drawings is a carelessly thrown together body of the artists' work, but that's on purpose. On entering Galerie Optica, one sees a cluster of beer bottles near one of the pillars, probable evidence of the amount of beer drunk during the vernissage, when the band played and a video doc was screened.

In the video *Armstrong Six*, wrapped in a tangle of light bulbs lit up, plays the organ to a slow dirge accompanied by his band. The lyrics are bizarre and provocative... "You be the ship. I'll be the crew... I'll fuck you up the ass and we'll get some glue." On two opposing walls, two 10 year old sculptures made of glass and plexiglass have been constructed with vertical mirrors. They may be a toss

of the hat to masters like Guido Molinari except that the dominant bilious yellow green hue suggests it could be a more poignant statement against artist's ambitions.

The more attention getting drawings and collected trashy effluvium on the west wall of the gallery give us a massive dose of caustic adolescent fury, ennui, cruelty, pain and suicidal tendencies - all on cheap paper. One such drawing in ballpoint pen depicts a young man sitting on a person lying on the ground in a sleeping bag. Another depicts a bag on a floor in an empty room and includes the sentence "Rotting Green Onions in a bag in a corner and the Stink of Death."

Is this an artist walking his talk or is it provocative pantomime of real situations? Punk rock nihilism was fueled by the ephemeral chords of its own destructive impulse but punk aesthetics married to visual art rarely meets the calling of art. What is interesting about Armstrong, for all his strongly willed purpose, is that the abyss between the act of seeing and the act of listening is never at all similar. Armstrong's visual pantomime (the glue sniffing illiterate retard drowning in a cesspool of abuse and longing for oblivion) may be too acute to sustain any long term audience, but it doesn't matter. Its only Hell, anyways!

This work reminds me of another forgotten soldier of the punk art era, Dana Bentley. Bentley's bent was to mount pieces of raw meat onto masonite and preserve the meat with gallons of poured clear epoxy resin. Over time, the meat began to rot beneath the coating. Its decay resulted in the eventual explosion of the putrescence meat through the surface, with many adverse reaction from the artgoing public's stomachs. In the same vein Armstrong's work is strong medicine and not necessarily good for you. One drawing of an owl whose eyes reveal swastikas stands out. This crude, but clever graphic reveals an artist posing as a philosopher poised to poison any source of higher consciousness, foraging through a netherworld of hopelessness and hate. While the rage that is Armstrong Six's calling card can be over the top, a silver lining of humour remains like a mushroom cloud after sunset.

Isak Elliott Augustine



Mira Reiss, *Milou le clown*, 2004

## MIRA REISS

### LE CIRQUE

ART en majuscule

950 rue Ottawa

Tel.: (514) 879-1117

November 17 – December 4, 2004

Life is but a stage, and in the works of Montreal artist, Mira Reiss, it takes the shape of a circular circus arena. It is the backdrop for a series of portraits and scenes that are at once burlesque and social satire, paintings done in a unique style, at first glance recalling the works of contemporary painter and sculptor, Fernando Botero.

Like the Colombian artist Botero, Reiss, who is a graduate of Concordia School of Fine Arts, shows a predilection for grossly oversized figures, and the colourful world of entertainment. Like Botero her works can be a sardonic commentary on our human foibles and vanities, mitigated by a marvelous painterly approach. Reiss' works are marked by a dense composition, filling the frame to the very edges, whether focusing on a solitary figure, or a group scene.

*He won* is a portrait of a strong solitary Samson-like man in the centre of the arena. His hands are clenched in fists, as if posing for a wrestling match. Larger than life and surrounded by the rapt faces of a crowd of spectators, he is lost in the din and commotion of it all. Using the plastic language of painting, this work becomes a kaleidoscope of colour and motion, of deep purples and warm ochre. Stepping outside the circus ring for a moment, Reiss paints a street scene in a work titled *Milou le clown*. A mysterious figure dances to his own tune in oversized shoes, one facing backwards. Surrounded by spectators he looks strange, neither human nor puppet... The viewer is carried into this magical circle, and becomes

one of the spectators. Once again, the composition is tight but never stifling, the movement created as much by form as by colour which directs the eye across the busy canvas. Unlike Botero's carefree revelers, Reiss' personages seem focused on an inner vision, oblivious to their surroundings. Suspended high above the yellow floor of the circus floor, the acrobat floats, lost in reverie. With doll-like blond hair and blue eye makeup, she would be a cartoon figure were it not for her expression. Beautifully composed into a yellow, shimmering background, she draws the viewer in with her forlorn glance.

In Reiss' colourful universe, the players are weighed down by their humanity, despite the revelry that surrounds them, and her paintings are at once poignant and carefree. Her rich palette creates an undulating landscape of shapes and tones, and her style sets her apart from other contemporary artists. Highly original and bold, Reiss has found a niche for herself with her unique vision of contemporary society, and her unusual expressionism.

Dorota Kozinska

## JOHN GRAHAM

### TWENTY VISIONS

Galerie McClure

November 6th to 20th

250 av. Victoria

Tel.: 514-488-9558

www.centredesartsvisuels.ca

John Graham's eclectic and inimitable style is well suited to printmaking, for as he readily admits, the democratic character of the medium is part of what attracted him to it. A print whether etching, woodcut or linocut can be produced in larger editions, and can be appreciated by many more people as a result. This is what led to the print revival in the early decades of the 20th century. We now have images that are generated by computer, manipulated and printed by these incredibly rapid machines, and so John Graham's narrative, style which builds image next to image, all to communicate something about our freely associative, or unconscious thoughts, is quite a rare commodity in today's artworld. The psychological nature of human

relationships seizes him and is an inner world he explores with an inquisitive instinct in the twenty works in this show.

A Montreal resident for some time, and now a teacher at Guelph University, John Graham builds a visual theatre out of the thin air of absurd juxtaposition and a quintessentially humanist point of view. Some of these prints are reminiscent of George Grosz but they are less satirical, more ludicrous. The associative and symbolic elements, while incongruous at times, become a swirl of personages, animals, nature. John Graham's art is extremely well executed and carries hidden messages about human behaviour. He has assembled a cosmology that is somewhat accidental and all his own, and this world is one where the narrative is never lost. The visual storyline while at times confusing is a lot like life. Dream-like images seize you in a minute like *Two Headed Dream* (2004) or *Beak Dream*. Depicted in a linear and motif style that calls to mind



John Clark, *Entertaining Doubts*  
medium: etching, 1994

west coast native artist Laurence Yuxweluptun's native paintings *Beak Dream* has a resounding blue colour and plays with the image like a theatre set designer might. Kinder than Hieronymus Bosch and more akin to the German Expressionist printmakers.

John Graham's art is an earthly paradise (with apologies to Milton) ridden with a chaotic pleasure and agglomerations of angst. *Circle Dream*, for instance, has a multiplicity of motifs, all brought together into the same etched scenario; a two-headed fish, a goat, a skull, a stretched piano, and a mandala-like plant configuration with eyes of each leaf. A large woodcut titled *Anima Amica* (1998) has a strong central tree motif. The graphic

black and white quality recalls Edvard Munch's prints. Other images with text from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* have a grainy woodcut quality reminiscent of 18th century woodcut artists. They delight in the act of illustration. John Graham's print with a repeated image of a lion with a human head. The colours vary with each successive image. Among the more subtle and intimate of the etchings are two small ones: *Entertaining Doubts* (1995) which has a series of events taking place around a table. It looks like someone is having their hair cut, and there are wine glasses, a cat is literally standing like a person (Puss 'n Boots?) at the table. *Reaching Echoes* (2004) has a human with an antlered head in a state of repose... and has a contemplative quality. The impulse behind these incredibly diverse graphic imaginings is a quirky one, for, as John Graham explains: "I am convinced that the alchemy between the circuit of our own thoughts, mythological representations, and dream information is one of the most fulfilling ways in which we can enrich our perception of the world."

John K. Grande

## SAINT-HYACINTHE

### DAVID MOORE

#### SPECULOR

495, rue Saint-Simon

Saint-Hyacinthe (Québec), J2S 5C3

Tel.: 450.773.4209

courriel:

expression@expression.qc.ca

#### PASSAGES

May 13 - June 26

963 rue Rachel

Tel.: 514-526-2616

www.graff.ca

The great late Argentinean writer Borges and the Irish-born Quebec sculptor, share something in common. Both have created their own unique virtual museums, one dedicated to time, the other to space. Borges, obsessed with writing as a way "to ease the passing of time" constructed a labyrinthine library that appears in many of his novels, a metaphor for the circular, spiraling endless nature of time in which he could wander for eternity. Moore,



on the other hand, fascinated by "the contradiction between reality and fiction", and a master at manipulating space, has created a celestial museum of infinite proportions, his reply to the Borgesian library.

This took form in a vast installation titled *Specular* at Expression in Saint-Hyacinthe. A fascinating enigma open to myriad interpretations, Moore's magical environment had no borders. Walls and staircases float above the floor, while seemingly 3-dimensional rocks speck the "sky dome" like stars. Mirrors reflect images, projecting illusory worlds onto the walls and ceiling. Even a vibrating spot on the floor, perhaps above some machinery, became part of the installation, forming a base for a pool of water whose ripples echoed the vibrations. Projected onto the wall, they added a ghostly moving dimension to the otherwise quiet composition. This, the principal wall in the installation, was the artist's original device to provoke a discussion on the subject of space.

Stylized figures appearing in a variety of configurations are Moore's Lovers among the planets, and the whole wall becomes his version of a Lovers Zodiac, showing lovers in different stages of relationships, with all that love brings: joy, stress, fun, hope. Above the entrance to the gallery space, painted violent red by the artist, two groups hover on each side of the archway.

Armed with strange sharp spears, with blood dripping from them, one group is on the attack, while the other, already wounded prepares to continue the conflict. One leaves *Specular* as if emerging from another dimension, alighting as it were back into reality.



This exploration of illusionary space continued with a summer show at Galerie Graff, in which Moore departed almost entirely from sculpture,

without ever abandoning his unique inner vision. Focusing this time on photography, he created illusionary sets, once photographed, then dismantled. The work of art became the final image, rather than the 3-dimensional model. Known for over 30 years mainly as a sculptor, Moore did indeed produce an impressive body of 3-dimensional works, mostly in wood. At his barn/atelier in Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu, David Moore commented on the change in media: "In my mind it simply shifted emphasis towards the illusory, the spatial. I realized with the sculptures that people just focused on the massive material part, and either be impressed by that or not, and often what would escape them was that this was also activating the space and creating shadows and ephemeral things, and thoughts and feelings. Doing a sculpture you're somehow inserting yourself into a tradition of monuments and figures and statues and so forth, and I started to understand something when digital imagery began to be explored, that here was a tool with which I could shift the emphasis towards the mental framework of what was happening with the figures, rather than always focusing on the solid mass, and being universally seen as a sculptor."

Always seeing himself as someone who could move between the various media, Moore returned to drawing, and a series titled *Passages* was exhibited at Galerie Graff this past summer. To produce the works, Moore literally painted himself into a corner, discovering its magical spatial and pictorial possibilities. By placing a mirror on one wall, and with a resulting reflection, he achieved an illusion of infinite space. Combined with real 3-dimensional figures and draw wall images, he built visual illusions and a visual reality. Forgetting the corner, he delved into the mystery of the shadows it created, and the mirrored distortions led him to show how we pretend that we can capture reality with a device. More like Buddhist mandalas made of colourful powder over a long period of time, only to be blown away in a second, Moore's imaginary sets remind us of the ever changing, temporary nature of time and space, and our place in it.

Dorota Kozinska

## TORONTO

### KAZUO NAKAMURA

#### A HUMAN MEASURE

Art Gallery of Ontario  
317 Dundas St. W.  
Toronto M5T 1G4  
Tel.: 416-979-6660 Xt. 454

Kazuo Nakamura's semi-abstract, sometimes monochrome other times coloured landscapes and more geometric abstractions are quite unique in the history of Canadian art. During the 2nd World War he and his family were, like many Japanese Canadians interned at the Tashme internment camp from 1942 to 1944. Nakamura's abstract formulations and matrices which are part of his art, reflect the drafting and mechanical drawing training he received in high school before internment. It was at the camp, and behind barbed wire that his interest in art developed further.

Nakamura integrates notions of landscape, a methodology of seeing, and a personal autobiographical motif throughout his career in his own particular way. He was an artist who brought to the Canadian landscape a more personal and subjective interpretation than the Group of Seven (for whom nature was an anthem more often than not without people). We feel less lonely in a Nakamura painting even if there is a somewhat scientific methodology to these works. It is as if Nakamura's landscapes full of trees were inhabited, and nature (however wild) were a cultivated place where one's inner thoughts could reflect and mirror the landscape experience. Patterns, configurations and delightful visual and formal phrases are distilled.

We can sense the painterly abstract influence of the the Painters 11 in Nakamura's early career. As the work develops his own unique cosmology with its particular near-scientific sequences, geometries and formal nuances emerges and grows.

This show of 60 sculptures, paintings and drawings seems like a hymn to the very essence of time and space whether in the *Number Structures*, which are later works or the oil and string paintings. These are purist works, the conceptual aesthetic meanderings of a discipline yet creative mind. The *Block Structures* look almost like inner city skyscraper buildings. They are also modular and



*Blue Reflections*, 1962  
Oil on canvas  
101.7 x 127 cm  
Purchase, with funds from the  
Peter Larkin Foundation, 1962  
(c) 2004 Art Gallery of Ontario

mysterious, almost surreal situational models in a flat landscape. The intricate yet highly abstract conception one discovers in Kazuo Nakamura's art is esoteric and akin to avant garde music. Art and science cross-over. We see it in the artist's pervasive phrasing of form, of space and of pattern – particularly evident in the Topological series with their linear grids. Nakamura believed science could advance the evolution of art, as during the Renaissance, when a system for representing perspective developed. This travelling show is most surprising for it highlights an artist who encrypted the natural world into his own unique visual and pure painterly way.

John K. Grande

### PETER KRAUSZ

#### LE CHANT DE LA TERRE

Nov. 6 - 20, 2004  
Mira Godard  
22 Hazelton Ave.  
Tel.: 416-964-8197  
www.godardgallery.com

### LOS ANGELES

#### HELEN'S EXILE

April 15 - May 28, 2005  
Forum Gallery  
8069 Beverly Blvd.  
Tel.: 323-655-1550 /  
Fax: 323-655-1565

Peter Krausz's sun drenched Mediterranean landscapes construct inviting scenarios. Though there are no people in these idyllic paintings, they represent places that have been civilized and cultivated for a very long time. The atmosphere of these places, and of a landscape topography becomes a metaphor for a civilization's heritage, it's agrarian legacy of living in harmony with the land.





*Le Chant de la Terre #13, 2004*  
92 x 204 cm, secco and alkyd  
Photo credit Pierre Charrier

The land in these paintings is meandering, and undulating, and carries a narrative within its own form. Ever so faintly conceptual, the landscapes that Krausz has brought into being with great painterly capacity are like living bodies, a macrocosmic world. It is no surprise then to find out that Peter Krausz's favourite painters from the past include Velasquez and Anselm Kiefer....Using pure powder pigment and egg emulsion, to then paint on a surface of polished plaster (secco) these tempera on panel paintings are built layer by layer. The formats vary from vertical to horizontal, narrow and broad. A series of smaller sepia on paper sketches are also being exhibited alongside the major new works.

As landscapes, the *Chant de la Terre* series achieve a light and colour resonance that carries an echo like musical compositions can do in our memory. These intuitive landscapes are as much about the way nature can work on our memory, and carry cadences of personal experience, from childhood or any other time in our lives. As such, the landscape becomes a universal metaphor for human experience. Like Paolo Ucello, Krausz builds a world using perspective, colour and design with great care. While observation and original sketch material undoubtedly plays a role in these paintings, they look natural but are actually constructions. The tension Krausz achieves includes some immeasurable quality of sublimity as an ingredient in the mix, something that makes these works popular among private collectors. Krausz has been painting landscapes for some 12 years now. These paintings are places of refuge, of contemplation, even windows of

hope, in a world where landscape are being devastated by development and pollution. As paintings they succeed particularly because Krausz loves the process of painting. These paintings work as landscapes because they are so subtly modeled with light and layers of colour. Almost like an architecture of nature and astoundingly simple, these compositions involve basic principles of design. We welcome them. They truly are the visual equivalent of songs for and of the earth!

John K. Grande

## MOOSE JAW

### DANA CLAXTON

#### *SITTING BULL AND THE MOOSE JAW SIOUX*

Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery  
September 9 to October 24  
461 Langdon Cres.  
Tel.: 306-692-4471  
Fax: 306-694-8016

Since 1997 Moose Jaw has attracted tourists to its prohibition-era Tunnels tour. Costumed actors lead visitors from basement to basement under the historic and well-preserved downtown while regaling listeners with tales of smuggling and a rather sketchy link to Chicago's Al Capone. It's a neat idea, but after seeing Dana Claxton's *Sitting Bull and the Moose Jaw Sioux*, it is clear that a more dramatic regional story has been overshadowed by a near-fiction.

Dana Claxton's four channel video installation tells the little known story of Sitting Bull and his band's exodus from the 1876 Battle of Little Bighorn (Custer's last stand) to Moose Jaw where many of their descendants continue to live. Among the exiles were the artist's great, great maternal grandparents. *Sitting Bull and the Moose Jaw Sioux* consists of four digital projections. The first appears

on a stand-alone wall in the middle and a third of the way into the large, dark room. It features footage of the local landscape: verdant hills and fields, tree lined paths, and the river—said to bend like a moose's jaw. The scenes are unremarkable, but as the exhibition unfolds and the viewer learns that this was the site of Sitting Bull's winter encampment, the images resonate with meaning and feeling. The moving camera becomes the artist searching for a connection to her past and to this place.

The three other projections are arranged into a theatrical-sized, floor-to-ceiling triptych. It begins with an image of Sitting Bull in the center panel and old newspaper clippings to the right and left. The clippings are accounts of the Sioux in Moose Jaw over the last century and some. Laid over these pictures is a scrolling text translating a conversation, in Lakota, between two elders, Hartland and Francis, who relate their families' experience in the Moose Jaw area after the migration. They recount both the hardships and more positive aspects of the resettlement.

Claxton's strategy is both good historical storytelling and creative art. The narrative is layered rather than linear, dialogic rather than authoritarian, and open-ended rather than contained. At least four accounts unspool at any one time. While they always compliment each other and advance the story, the gentle polyphony encourages repeated viewings and the sense that we can gather only glimpses and should not imagine ourselves completely informed. Unlike conventional documentaries, there is no narrative arc, rising tension, climax, and denouement. In fact, the initiating event, the Battle at Little Bighorn, does get told until near the end, and its central antagonist, Custer, is barely

mentioned. This is the Sioux account of the battle and their subsequent lives. It is eventful, but, until now, only a footnote to settler history.

The rest of the projection is a collage of historical documents and images interplaying with reflections of the Sioux elders. While there are stories of starvation, deprivation and the broken treaty promises familiar to people around here, Claxton does an affecting job of pairing the grand historical passages with more homey personal accounts. There is no gloating over the slaughter at Little Bighorn by the victors (the Sioux), rather the story centers on the aftermath and Sitting Bull and his band's crossing the into Canada to avoid reprisals. Surprisingly, while there are allusions to hardship, Claxton also records stories of the Sioux being well treated by Canadian settlers. Francis, one of the elders, recounts that his father told him that the Lakota who worked in Moose Jaw worked side-by-side and made friends with white men.

For me, the most resonant aspect of the show was the frequent pairing of the elders' Lakota and English voices over images of the river and trails. Claxton gently lays an Aboriginal view of history and personal experience on the land. I doubt anyone experiencing this exhibition can look at their local landscape as they once did. Ghosts and the stories of their descendants now inscribe it. Driving through the area shortly after seeing the show, I was struck by the sensation that the farms were a thin veneer that only recently covered these older stories. Claxton inscribes fills this seemingly empty landscape with living memories and offers Moose Jaw a much more compelling story than the maybe visit of a Chicago gangster.

David Garneau



Installation view, 2004



# THADDEUS HOLOWNIA: NATURE, ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE

an interview with John Grande

THADDEUS HOLOWNIA  
WALDEN POND REVISITED

Corkin Shopland Gallery  
55 Mill Street, Bldg 61  
Tel.: 416-979-1980

Thaddeus Holownia was born in Bury Saint Edmunds, England, in 1949 and emigrated to Canada five years later. He has been a faculty member at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick since 1977 and is presently Professor and Head of the Department of Fine Arts. Holownia has dedicated most of his career to large-format view-cameras, working with 8 x 10", 7 x 17", 11 x 14" and 12 x 20" in black and white and colour. Featured in solo shows at the Corkin Shopland Gallery (Toronto), Centro de la Imagen (Mexico City), McCord Museum (Montreal), the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Halifax), the Owens Art Gallery (Sackville NB), the Jane Corkin Gallery (Toronto). A 25 year retrospective of his work will be held in 2006 at the Art Gallery of New-



Thaddeus Holownia, Trout River Gulch

foundland and Labrador. Thaddeus Holownia lives in Jolicure, New Brunswick with his partner Gay Hansen, four children, 10 horses, five dogs, numerous cats and other creatures of the Tantramar marshes.

**JG:** I have always admired your black and white photographs, whether nature or architectural. Are you tempted to expand the size of your photos or are you sticking with conventional formats?

**TH:** I am putting on an exhibition entitled *Walden Pond Revisited* as the opening exhibition at the Corkin Shopland Gallery. It is a spectacular new space in the historic Distillery section of Toronto. For that show I am going to enlarge the *Walden Pond* vertical trees to a human scale, something I rarely do.

**JG:** Sometimes photos can be overblown, almost like a kind of image dominance of the physical environment by the photo. When this happens, the photo is less something you look into and more something that impacts you...

**TH:** Yes. I would rather be dominated by a photo that is a reasonable size. In the case of the *Walden Trees* I want those to have an immediate confrontational element with the viewer. They are from 7" x 17" negatives so they possess an extraordinary amount on detail allowing them to work on two levels. Distant and up close. I am interested in the physical, the structure of the place. At *Walden Pond*, it has been with the efforts of Don Henley from the Eagles who took a real interest in the environment and has through the *Walden Woods Project* which has been involved with, raised millions of dollars to buy up property around *Walden Pond*. He was very instrumental in getting the Thoreau archives building built for the Thoreau Institute.

**JG:** I like the way you refer to it - the structure of the place. There's an anomaly right there. You have nature there and yet it is the *Walden* site that has been encroached upon by human civilization. Many of your photos have this double entendre where nature is in situ and then changes as a result of many layers of intervention with and in nature.

**TH:** That is a kind of flirtation I have always had. Falling into and falling out of just not wanting to deal with it and dealing with pure nature. But I occasionally stick my foot in it. The *Anatomy of a Pipeline* was probably one that I kind of saw something that everyone shunned and grimaced about it happening. I tried to go and

find some elegance in the process of the construction.

**JG:** You photograph in a quite conventional, almost passive way, but you are actually capturing something that is actively transforming and changing the environment - this pipeline. There are subtle messages like this in the way you compose your photographs.

**TH:** I hope so!

**JG:** Another example of this is the *Tantramar Marshes* - your photo series that records a meeting place of land and sea.

**TH:** I think of the subtlety of that space and the fact that the marshes exist only because of the human intervention of building the dikes to hold back the Fundy tides, thus creating this essentially human-made landscape. Then the subtle changes of the impermanence of someone coming and wanting to do something there, and how the tides can come and eliminate it, or alter it, or make it disappear.

**JG:** I do not want to generalize too much, but there is that difference between an American and a Canadian point of view to do with nature.

**TH:** An American highway for instance will blast the hell out of a rockscape along a highway and install netting over it - nothing natural remains. The presumption in the Canadian point of view is something Northrop Frye talked about in *The Bush Garden*. The Canadian presumption is: "You might win against nature for a while but nature wins in the end." I believe many Canadian photographers are dealing with this approach to landscape - Ed Burtnysky, Geoffrey James, Roy Arden, and yourself. Canada has a variety of different photographers who have a kind of subtlety. They do not hit you over the head with their image. There is a distancing from the landscape or environment that is uncommon. We seem to have seized a moment in contemporary photography right now for that reason. I believe you are exhibiting in Prague or Berlin.

**TH:** Architecture in a landscape context interests me greatly, I have been working on a project since 1978 titled *Stations: Irving Architectural Landscapes*. It takes on the gas sta-

tion as an important element in the rural landscape of the maritimes.

**JG:** A nostalgia for the industrial?

**TH:** I hope it is not nostalgia. I guess it is an honoring of something that happens and it is not necessarily noticed. I am working from a Maritime standpoint. So over a 25 year period I captured photographs dealing with visual elements of the marketing of gas and services. It just seems to me that politically and economically the Irvings created something that was unique to architecture and to communities in the Atlantic region. That completely changed due to the nature and economics of selling gas so you lost the model of the rural service bay gas station and you went to the model of the convenience store restaurant within the confines of the gas station. Over the extended period of time that I have been photographing this most of the architecture changed and in many cases no longer exists.

**JG:** You are conscious that there is an organization in the chaos of the photo. I sense your approach is more environmental than focussed on the object whether landscape or architecture.

**TH:** With my photography I think mostly in terms of place and the content. The camera deals with a landscape orientation - horizontal - so place is very important. The second thing is the fact that with a large format camera can take the detail of that situation and heighten it for you in the print. So even when you are there, you don't necessarily engage in all the structures and elements the same way as when you are looking at a photograph on a wall with everything else absent. I think your heightened awareness in response to an image is engaged with a photograph that has an exquisite amount of information in it.

**JG:** What about your photo-works that exist in series?

**TH:** I was in an exhibition in Hamburg, Germany called *Monet's Legacy: Series, Order and Obsession* that started from the thesis that many artist's work with the strategy of the Series. It started with Claude Monet's *Haystack* paintings and *Waterloo Bridge* series and moved through to





Thaddeus Holownia, from *Jolicure Pond series* (1996-2000)

today... including Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Alexej von Jawlensky, Walter De Maria, Vanessa Beecroft, Carl Andre, Josef Albers, Piet Mondrian, photography included Bernd and Hilla Becher, Cindy Sherman, Gerhard Richter, Roni Horn, Ed Ruscha and a few others. I exhibited three series in that show: *Rockland Bridge* (1981-2000), sixteen photographs taken from the same camera position of the same bridge. The bridge is the subject but just the pilings remain. The tide is moving in and out, and one senses the power of the Bay of Fundy... the ice, seasons and so on; *Jolicure Pond* (1996-2000), nine photographs taken of a pond in a landscape, again a man-made artificial structure. This work deals with the changing light and the pond as an mirror into the emotional element one might derive from observing a single land form over a period of time. *Headlighting* (1974-1977), the final of the three consists of portraits of people beside their cars that collectively represent industry juxtaposed with humanity.

**JG:** And your photo projects often develop into some quite unique book projects like the *Ova Ave* for example. Those photos are exposés of a beautiful design endemic to nature and capture a camouflage character common to many natural species, and forms...

**TH:** Yes. My partner is an ornithologist and an lecturer in the Biology department at Mount Allison University and I always admired the bird egg collection in the biology department. I always wanted to do something about time and space... so I photographed these birds eggs from the collection. Each bird egg has a unique marking, much like a fingerprint. These photographs were then given to my friend, poet and collaborator Harry Thurston who wrote wonderful responses based on the species of each bird.

**JG:** A response to environment and geo-specifics?

**TH:** Exactly. The book format allows me to create a structure to integrate something beyond making a catalogue of my work. There is something timeless and energetic about a true literary and visual art collaboration.

**JG:** And yours are exceptional for their quality and content. What new projects are you working on?

**TH:** There is a new book called *Arboreal*, largely based on photographic work from the great northern peninsula of Newfoundland. It is a work that I did in the Trout River Gulch, while in an artist residency at Gros Morne National park. I was interested in this place that exists in very changing and sometimes harsh weather conditions. Nature adapts to those conditions remarkably. There are trees that have lived hundreds of years and are only a few feet tall. This is a really hostile environment. Nature survives but morphs into really interesting forms. The other part of the series is looking at the people who live there through the architecture of the place. It is coupled with the writings of Peter Sanger, who collaborated on an earlier book project *Ironworks* inspired by a collection of blacksmith made objects. This new book *Arboreal* will be like the *Dyklands* book - a 10 x 19 inch book. I am self publishing it and it will be released in early 2005.

**JG:** One always feels this east coast vernacular in the architecture and places that you capture for a world audience.

**TH:** I think that I am increasingly interested with notions of architecture in the landscape. As a fleeting gauge of impermanence and of change. When you observe a place for a quarter century things float up to the surface and attach themselves to you.

## LONDON, UK

### GWEN JOHN AND AUGUSTUS JOHN

Tate Britain  
September 29 - Jan. 9, 2005  
Millbank SW1  
Tel.: 44 20 7887 8000  
www.tate.org.uk

While the works of Augustus (1878-1961 and his sibling Gwen (1876-1939) have often been exhibited in exhibitions, never before has their work been presented together in such a quantity. Not only does this provide us with a perspective on the careers of two of Britain's most dedicated modernists, but it likewise provides an interesting view on how careers that began on fairly similar arts territory, sharing accommodation of Fitzroy St. in London while studying at the Slade School, would go on to be so different later on.

Among the over 60 paintings and drawings are some masterpieces of portraiture, not only the early solemn portraits Gwen could paint, but equally outdoors and playful, colourful, lively as could be the case with earlier Augustus. A comparison of Augustus John's figure in the landscape scenes with Canada's own Edwin Holgate who painted outdoor nudes in the landscape would be an interesting exercise. It would make it clear that Canadians' and Quebecers' vision of their place in the landscape even in the early stages of modernism, was significantly different from the British point of view. Augustus John's *The Blue Pool* (ca. 1911) painted near Poole Harbour is edifying, rich and evocative, and the dark haired figure with book is set in a structured setting, albeit lush and beautiful. There are many truly magnetic portraits of Dorelia by Augustus, and if somewhat sentimental and Romantic, they exude a strong French Fauvist quality.

Gwen John's portrait subjects can carry a cadence of extreme fragility, of exposure, and a dour complexion. There are tiny details, symbolic and alluring, that make us aware how inquiring and deep her inquiry into her portrait subjects could be. This is notably the case with *Girl with Bare Shoulders* (1909-1910) and *Chloe Boughton-Leigh* (ca. 1907) and *Young Woman Wearing a Large Hat* (late 1910s - early 1920s).



Augustus John  
*Dorelia Standing before a Fence* (ca. 1905)  
Oil on canvas, 202 x 122 cm  
Tate, Presented by Tate Members 2003



Gwen John  
*Self-Portrait in a Red Blouse* (1902)  
Oil on canvas  
44.8 x 34.9 cm  
Tate. Purchased 1942.

What this unusual exhibition demonstrates is that while Gwen's reputation rose, Augustus, who at 25 was considered a prodigy to be compared with Gauguin and Matisse, gradually became hampered by commissions and official painting, obliged as he was to paint political and society portraits. The paintings done with and for people he knew and admired still had an endearing and lively quality... Gwen's style, long after her long and arduous affair with Rodin has passed, was renowned and popular in Paris. The interior atmospheres were truly her own, yet socially shrewd with their hints and cues about life at the time painted into the compositions. Both Augustus and Gwen were ultimately unreal dreamers who lived in a world all their own. They were both incredible at drawing. To see these drawings now is to capture some moment from the past with all its extreme sensitivity once again in the present. This show is a must see if you are in London!

John K. Grande