

## English Report

---

Volume 50, numéro 200, automne 2005

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/52596ac>

[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 compte rendu

(2005). Compte rendu de [English Report]. *Vie des Arts*, 50(200), 73–78.

## CARAQUET, NEW BRUNSWICK

### FESTIVAL DES ARTS VISUELS EN ATLANTIQUE (FAVA)

June 29 - July 3rd  
Carrefour de la mer  
Tel.: 506-727-7726  
fava@nb.aibn.com

To mark its 10th anniversary of existence the Festival des Arts Visuels en Atlantique brought together a remarkable spirit of community and enthusiasm with the help of a remarkable crew of volunteers. Invited sculptor André Lapointe held centre stage with his exhibition of *in situ* nature installations recorded as photographs and an actual stone installation within the Carrefour de la mer. New Brunswick's commitment to the visual arts scene was likewise enhanced by the presence of art critic and Governor General of New Brunswick Herménégilde Chiasson. This year's winners of the francophone Visual Arts competition were Georges Goguen, Pauline Bujold and Raymonde Fortin...

The title for FAVA's summer 2005 event, *Rouge Vivarium* orchestrated a vision of the visual arts as a lively forum where life and art co-exist. The event, at the Carrefour near the harbour in Caraquet was in an environment not so unlike an aquarium. This aquarium/vivarium brought together a full range of diverse artists' output, among them Carole Bherer, Georges Goguen, Pauline Bujold, Nicole Haché, Johanne Duchaine, Gaetan Doucet, Denis Lanteigne, Muriel Faille, Nicole Haché, Derek Letourneau and Bob Belliveau-Ferrin Lemieux. The event was truly ignited into a place where multi-talented sculptors, painters, printmakers, photographers and multi-media artists collaborated, exchanged ideas, presented workshops and exhibited their works. Groupe Existe, for example, played a major role in assisting with this event as did many visual artists from Caraquet and the region. Rouge Vivarium sought to highlight the need for humanity to look after what few resources we have left, to safeguard future life on our planet earth.

Above all, *Rouge Vivarium* succeeded in re-generating a community interest in all things cultural, and awakening inspiration among

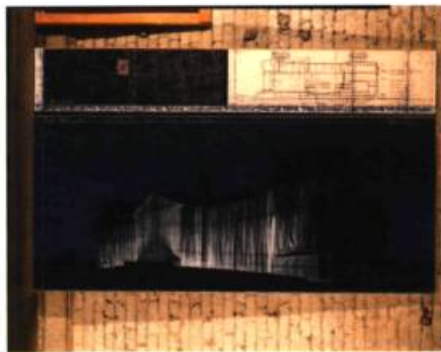
younger members of the Acadian community. The Acadian passion for life and all things was likewise reaffirmed by the special presence of the renowned invitee Ousmane Sow from Dakar, Senegal – a very rare visit to North America.

John K. Grande

## HALIFAX, N.S.

### CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE THE WÜRTH MUSEUM COLLECTION

11 August - 16 October 2005  
The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia  
1723 Hollis Street  
Tel.: 904-424-5280  
<http://www.agns.gov.ns.ca>



This is the only Canadian venue for this important exhibition of the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude. These two collaborative artists are well known for their large scale projects, particularly those that wrap landmarks like the Pont Neuf in Paris and the Reichstag in Berlin, but there is much more to their art than just wrapping things. Their most recent project was the installation work *The Gates* in New York City's Central Park in February of 2005. This exhibition is an opportunity to see the creative process that makes their very large scale works possible. It includes small preparatory sketches, large collages and drawings, maps, scale models, and even some small scale early wrapped objects. There are eighty items in all. In addition there are also videos which show the artists working on their projects.

In no small measure it is the run up to the actual work that is the real art of these two artists. These two phases, or periods, are what the

artists call *software* and *hardware* respectively. The software period can encompass many years as was the case for *The Gates* (1979-2004). This 'soft' period is where the concept and thinking take part. It is also when Christo makes his beautiful drawings. He alone does the drawings, but his wife, Jeanne-Claude is a very active, and an equal partner in all projects. A big part, and this is where Jeanne-Claude shines, is talking authorities into giving them permission to do the projects. From very early on in their work, the couple have made films and videos of this process. It is indeed an art to get the mayor of Paris to agree to let them wrap its most famous and one of its most busy bridges or the mayor of New York to let them build miles of gates in Central Park. Christo is good

at this, but Jeanne-Claude is superb. For the *Running Fence* (1972-76) project in California, they had to talk any number of land owners, not to mention two different sets of county officials, for permission to build their forty kilometre fence across the land.

The beautiful thing about this exhibition is that you can really see

the thinking process of this pair of exceptional artists. As I have stated, the drawings are beautiful and Christo could have had a decent career as a conventional artist, but he and his wife have achieved something much more. They were environmentalists of the first order long before it became fashionable. Their work drew, and continues to draw, attention to both the urban and rural environment in striking ways that go far beyond the wall of art galleries which can so often limit an artist's production. Christo and Jeanne-Claude's lasting work is in documentation as their actual projects are only up for a limited time. The *Running Fence* was up for fourteen days, *The Gates* (all 7,503 of them) for sixteen days, and *Valley Curtain* (1970-72) for a mere 28 hours. The curtain project which placed a very large cloth, 12,780 square metres with a width of 381 metres, between two mountains near Rifle, Colorado, should have lasted a bit longer, but

high winds forced its removal. When a project's time is over all traces of the work is removed and the site is returned to its natural state. The artists also recycle their project material. We are left with the drawings which led up to the projects, and photographs and films of works in place.

Fortunately, as this exhibition demonstrates, the quality of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's documentation is first rate. Their attention to detail is exquisite. There are many drawings in this exhibition relating to *The Gates* that are stunning. Perhaps I was drawn to them because some of Christo's most recent drawings prove he is getting ever better as a draughtsman. It is wonderful when an artist continues to grow. I might be missing the point because Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work is an equal partnership and their completed work is more than the sum total of its parts. Drawing is only one part, but having taught drawing myself for thirty-seven years and I do know a good drawing when I see one. I do have this idea that drawing is the basis for all visual art, but I freely admit that I am biased.

The work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude raises questions of the very nature and purpose of art. Is art, to quote the title of Harold Rosenberg's book, *The Anxious Object*, awaiting the verdict of history or is it in the realm of idea, remote of the necessity of being a unique object? As a traditionalist I favour the former, but being realistic at the same time, I understand that art, particularly today's art, can be the latter. The art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude is a bridge between these two definitions of art. What I like most is the sheer beauty, be it in the thing itself such as wind on the cloth of the *Running Fence*, or the drawings leading up to a project. Both have the ability to invoke awe. It is not often that we have the opportunity to view the thought processes of artists in such detail as this exhibition does. It is a shame that the exhibition will not be seen in Canada outside of Halifax. I would go so far as to say that if you read this review before the exhibition closes in mid-October that it is worth a special trip to Halifax – you will not be disappointed!

Virgil Hammock

## MONTREAL

### MARIA GIULIA ALEMANNI

September 19th - October 3rd  
Beaux-arts David Astrof  
Thomson House  
3650 McTavish  
www.artap.com

For the first ever Canadian showing of Italian artist Maria Giulia Alemanno's paintings, Beaux-arts David Astrof has brought together an unusual body of work. In a sense these large scale paintings share something in common with Stanley Spencer, for they carry the signs and symbols of religion though their main emphasis is on the art. The similarities, however, end there. Maria Giulia Alemanno's paintings embody the personas of the Orishas from the Santéria religion. Her visual interpretations are part imagined and part based in this religion that is so relevant in Cuba, Brazil and other parts of South America.

The Orishas, considered to be emissaries of Olodumare or God are believed to have powers to rule over the forces of nature and humanity. This in and of itself makes Santéria interesting as a religion for the forms, the occurrences, and elements in nature are literally configurations of these Orishas. For Alemanno, Santéria has invaded her soul, and as she comments: "If my Orishas can take form here among these fields (in the Italian countryside), it's because the soul of Caribe has deeply invaded my heart to make me a continuous presence in its waves, its coral reefs, its skies."

When she first started to make watercolour renditions of the Orishas after a visit to Cuba (where she first learned of Santéria) this folkloric religion with such an attachment to the importance of colour, costume and dance attracted her like a magnet. Since then Santéria has taken Alemanno on what she refers to as "an infinite journey." The first exhibitions she held in Italy have been followed up by exhibitions in Havana at St. Francis-Orula Abbey, in the restored heart of the old town, and at El Taller del Papel Artisanal and the Sala Mercedita Valdés of the Yoruba Society. Alemanno's interpretations of the Orishas were likewise shown during the 8th Meeting of Social and Cultural Anthropology

on Afro-American roots, dedicated to Fernando Ortiz.

As paintings, these works illustrate this religion. They become embodiments of stories of the woods and seas, of the bushes and trees, and of men and gods that are every bit as epic as the ancient Greek stories of Homer and equally as nature-sensitized as any ecologist's. Ochún, a great beauty in this religion is painted by Alemanno and carries symbols - a heart with an arrow - a bell and a fish. Dressed in a flowing dress Ochún is accompanied by an image of the sun and peacock feathers - all overt symbols associated with beauty. The painterly collaging continues with Yeamayá, considered mother of water and life. The allegorical style is attractive for its simple and forthright intertwining of sea imagery. A boat, for instance - the old masted sailing kind - rides on waves that are this goddess' hair. This merwoman's very clothing becomes an embodiment of the seas. Chango the Santéria king of blood and fire is vividly portrayed in red clothing breathing fire, with his machete, sword and rooster - a formidable and fear-inspiring protagonist. Elegguá, a tiny sprite-like figure with magical powers who is said to open doors has a kite flying in the air beside her. There is an atmosphere of serendipity and chance to this. She is clothed playfully, has a mask and carries a walking stick.

What makes Alemanno's interpretations so revealing is that they are her very own readings of what these Orishas represent. She does not copy other peoples' visions or renditions of these highly personalized Gods. In so doing the artist communicates to us, just as the dance and music that are part of Santéria something of that home-grown sensibility and cultural vitality. With colour and cadence, these vividly charged depictions intuitively communicate the lively wisdom, the living traditions, often unrecorded in written form, and kept alive through the vernacular of the Santéria religion whose fusion of voodoo and christianity, even ancient Yoruba African culture feels strangely post-Modern for all its hybridity!

John K. Grande

### DISTANCE POINT: PAINTINGS BY LEOPOLD PLOTTEK

June 7th - August 20th  
Maison de la culture  
Cote-des-Neiges  
5290 Cote-des-Neiges  
Tel.: 514-872-6889

A simple and unpretentious presentation of ten paintings by veteran Montreal painter Leo Plotek at the Maison de la culture Cote-des-Neiges continues to reveal this artist's incredible adeptness and dedication to the painterly process... Plotek is definitely not asleep at the easel these days! Visitors to the show saw some very compelling paintings, among the best this critic has come across in years. Assembled as a kind of preoccupation with life altering moments in the lives of artists and philosophers throughout history, Leopold Plotek's recent exhibition dives into the thematics of his subjects with a poetic versatility and unpredictable prowess.

What is evident from this show is the artist's recent return to all things representational, particularly over the last two years. This marks a change from Plotek's more often seen interior landscapes. The present foray is specifically into works that make reference to (a) history. These paintings are very similar to J.M.W. Turner in their atmospheric embellishment. Their ambiguity is resolved by the titles these works have. Their surfaces are covered in smoky hues and carry an elegiac solemnity.

In referring to the "distance point" that this show draws its title from Plotek states: "...This is a point in perspectival geometry whose purpose is obscure to the viewer but important to the painter. The key thing here is that it does not occur within the picture itself, yet helps determine almost everything in it. Just like inspiration." Entering the gallery the first painting one sees is a painting that depicts William Blake as a young boy lying in bed, receiving his first vision of God. As the boy nonchalantly gazes at the apparition of God's munificent face peering inside Blakes bedroom, all is still and suspended in time. The scene offers the viewer a portrait of God as uninvited guest, a presence that the young Blake would later pay for

with a beating by his father for divulging this anecdote out loud.

Another painting shows the great American poet Hart Crane in a frozen mid - leap into the blue sea on the journey by ship he took to New York from Cuba. This moment in time is captured eloquently as Crane leaps from the bow above the green waves. We see a lifesaver at the bottom corner of the work. Perhaps this is an ironic metaphor for what the poet was ultimately trying to escape. Again, the element of time is suspended as if from the depths of a dream. Lastly, we see a painting that depicts jazz saxophonist Sonny Rollins ascending the stairs up to the Williamsburg Bridge to practice his music undistracted by fame and fortune. East River Blue; Sonny Rollins on Williamsburg Bridge is a mass of black and blue brushwork articulating the night sky above New York. The picture has a peaceful ambiguity, an atmosphere that resounds as if from the depths of a dream. The patina of antiquity marries evenly with passion. This is what makes for a compelling work of art. The theatrical element is most evident. The paintings develops a dialogue with silence. It reverberates like an effective monologue might do on stage. In fact, these paintings seem to represent states of consciousness that call to mind the stage. Although some of the works are unrelated by subject, their common ground is the anecdotal moment brimming with poetic nuance. The role of the artist as underdog is highlighted, and Plotek embraces the accident, the vulnerability that underlies much of history's great ones.

Seen in the context of a time largely dominated by meat and potatoes realism in painting, a genre based form designed for commercialism poetry in painting seems like a discarded bone buried in some cold, cold ground. Despite all this, Leopold Plotek manages to breathe fire back into the picture.

Isak Elliott Augustine

## GORDON SHEPPARD WATERVISIONS

Aug. 11 - Sept. 11th  
Salon Bibliocafe  
4231b boul. Saint-Laurent  
Tel.: 514-277-7778



WaterVisions #9, 1998  
C-Print from 35 mm

Gordon Sheppard's Water-Visions show brings a sharp focus on nature its place in our lives. As a primordial source or site for reflection on our inner being, nature has inspired countless artists and photographers. For Sheppard, nature is not a monument in the sense that Ansel Adams recorded it. Instead, nature becomes a place where impressions are a source for replenishment and imagination. One thinks of the impressionist era, of Debussy or Claude Monet. These large scale C-Prints give rise to unconscious thoughts, the kind that link us to our dreams and innermost reflections. Some are out of focus, or suggest the movement of reeds, water and there is a tension between the surface of things, and what we cannot read clearly. As such, these works became a paraphrase for our unusual cultural vision of life and afterlife, of our place as it relates to more eternal concerns.

As photography Sheppard's work is incredibly passive, accepting of the subject – nature. In this sense his art is truly environmental and as a photographer he is not at all caught up in any trend, but stands out as an eclectic, enigma, and reveals his love of nature, so abundant in our land that we often can't see the forest for the trees! These works are incredibly sensitive to the fact

that as humans we largely ignore nature, and do not perceive its details, elegance, and growth forms – particularly the vivid real lifecolour and connectedness of each element to the next. Gordon Sheppard's

WaterVisions show is a defense of nature and a cry to re-generate our links to nature. We may ignore nature in this technology saturated culture but this has not lessened our ability to read and intuit something from the incredible forms and life around us. This is not conscious but unconscious but the result of habits, behaviours developed through the use of our latest developed tools and machines.

Just as our links to nature are embodied in these large scale colour photos works, Sheppard does not take it all too seriously, presenting these photos in beautiful presentational hinged frames that have a twist of Duchampian irony to them. After all, the museological presentation sometimes takes precedent over the culture, rather like nouvelle cuisine, as the presentation does with food. And so Sheppard shows how well he understands the notion of art as a presentation in everyday life, even a replacement for old fashioned theatre. He likewise leaves us with a sense that these underwater images of algae and water weeds, or lilies that beauty still plays a role, and can contribute something to us in our rush, speeding through life without taking the time to enjoy the view. Sheppard's photos are a mertaphor for the brief and passing nature of human life. In the text accompanying the show Sheppard mentions

that these works arose out of his reflection on having cancer. He regained an important respect for the body and the way we treat it, and began to photograph nature in the Eastern Townships soon after. Like Monet's Water Lilies, there is something uncanny about the way these nature photos attract us, as if we were mere magpies drawn by some primordial force to these ancient contemporary places and images. Simple and tranquil they are imbued with a spirit of place. The subject is nature. The subject is us, as we are nature. Beautiful!

John K. Grande

## SUSAN VALYI OUT ON A LIMB

September 6th – 17th  
Sandra Goldie Gallery  
1360, ave. Greene  
Tel: (514) 935.2355  
Fax: (514) 935.7236  
E-mail: art@galeriegoldie.com

Transforming found objects into works of art is far from a new concept. From Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol, to Quebec's own Armand Vaillancourt, artists have been inspired by the quotidian. Even the great Picasso, with his famous adage claiming to find rather than seek, tinkered with discarded fragments, creating the delightful *Baboon and Young* using toy cars, or the famous *Bull's Head* constructed from the handlebars and seat of a rusty bicycle. The whimsical sculptures of Ontario-based artist Susan Valyi pick up the theme of metamorphosis in an exhibition of her recent works at Sandra Goldie Gallery in Westmount.

A peripatetic scavenger, Valyi is particularly drawn to smooth pieces of driftwood, metal fragments of all shapes, but most of all to antique shoe forms which she collects by the boxful. From foot to leg to torso, her sculptures grow almost organically, assuming their newfound bodies with bashful consternation. They waddle and hover, some on tiptoe, others firmly grounded, a tad lost in their unfamiliar surroundings. Suspended in motion, Valyi's *Skating Club* is an armless athlete, one giant foot on an old skate, the other high up in the air, its pirouette

interrupted. Next to it, *Foot to Bill* is a study in stillness. Made of a pair of wooden legs and a scythe blade, it resembles a curious humanoid bird, the tip of its metal beak resting on the floor.

As if belonging to the same family, *Lead foot Annie* is an avian creature on mismatched feet made of shoe forms, one metal, the other wooden. Despite its bulky parts and featureless head, Valyi's irreverent creation emanates a mixture of coquetry and defiance. It is, indeed, the inherent personality of each piece that takes the viewer beyond the tactile and the visual, but the artistic value of the works lies in Valyi's eye for the quirky. Without sacrificing the aesthetic, or giving in to parody – with the exception, perhaps, of *Lulu*, a hapless hammerhead creature – Valyi's 3-dimensional composites offer an unusual visual experience. They are uniformly organic, given to odd postures and stances, and best appreciated on their own, separate from their fantastic family.

Dorota Kozinska



## OTTAWA

## DANIEL RICHTER: PINK FLAG WHITE HORSE

National Gallery of Canada  
June 25 - Sept. 10th  
www.nationalgallery.ca  
Tel.: 1-800-319-2787



*Zurberes*, 2000  
255 x 370 cm, oil on canvas  
Collection Susan & Michael Hort  
Courtesy: Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin

In the same multi-faceted relief genre as Peter Doig, but with an even more theatrical and carnivalesque approach to the painted subject, German artist Daniel Richter plays on and with various styles and symbolic imagery, often from mediatic and photographic sources. The visual fables Richter generates are a generation or two away from fellow German painter Anselm Kiefer, who sought out ancient legends like Siegfried, Isis and Osiris.

Richter construes his visual stories with his paintbrush. And they are rife with everything abstraction was against in the post-War era – symbolism, allegory, human angst, even a magnetic social expressionism, albeit hedonistic in post-millennium times. It is the ambiguity that makes these works so unsettling....hard to read. As art, they sit on a proverbial wall where meanings are never fully explained or understood. Basic historical assumptions once taken for granted, are no longer fully understood... The contexts have shifted and boundaries of behaviour have too. Richter reinvents history painting but gives it an almost folkloric aura of abandonment and decadence. There are distant cultural echoes of Bruno Schulz's *Street of Crocodiles* or Gunter Grass' *Tin Drum* or of George Grosz and Otto Dix but this is a politically correct era where emotions are sanitized, even packaged.

There is none of the certainty we associate with paintings that deal in fabled stories, epics or history in general. In *Dream South*, we see naked dancing figures in the distance, a partially constructed house, Pop pink Day-Glo trees, gnome-like person and a stooped green-nosed man (a gardener?). The cacophony is delectable and amid all the decadence of *Zurberes* (2000) we sense that this crown of masked men and monkeys amusing themselves to death are nearing the end of their party. A crowd huddled together in a bright orange inflatable life raft, suggests a loss of meaning in *Bas* (2002) are there by necessity. Unlike Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* this group of survivors are not heroic, just lost and drifting and floating in a dark sea of uncertainty about their potential present. Lost in a loss of context(s)...

Various codes of behaviour are reinvented and we recognize traces of symbolism in the ghoulish caricatures of these post-human mask-like faces that populate these paintings. In another painting the figures look like they are literally dematerializing, either from some disastrous and invisible force or because of the death of substance. *Tefzen* (2004) has a bear and a clown and a dog... what could be gloomy in a Kathe Kollwitz kind of way, becomes painful and hard earned fun. The masks we see conjure up images of Ensor, and the stolid figures (alienated and solemn) and skull calls to mind the Norwegian Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

Above all, it is Daniel Richter's love of painting for and of itself and his willingness to challenge our assumptions about style that truly make these works live. They do not bore us, and he is truly gifted. *Pbienix* is a situationist scenario with a sense that rational history is headed for the garbage dump. More grating and unpleasant is Richter's image of men beating a horse to death in *Das Recht* (2001).

Daniel Richter's paintings do not make it easy to accept any singular and clear vision of the world we live in. He adopts as many styles as he needs to achieve fabled post-Nuclear effect. From drip, to abstract, to figurative, to cartoon-like annotation, all these stylistic maneuvers are held together by a

strong sense of what exactly the artist intends to communicate... that is angst, and a sense of density, compaction and simultaneous dematerialization of the body/object. *Pink Flag – White Horse* is heroism gone awry in an era of abundance. It's a folkloric maelstrom where the signposts have shifted.

John K. Grande

## TORONTO

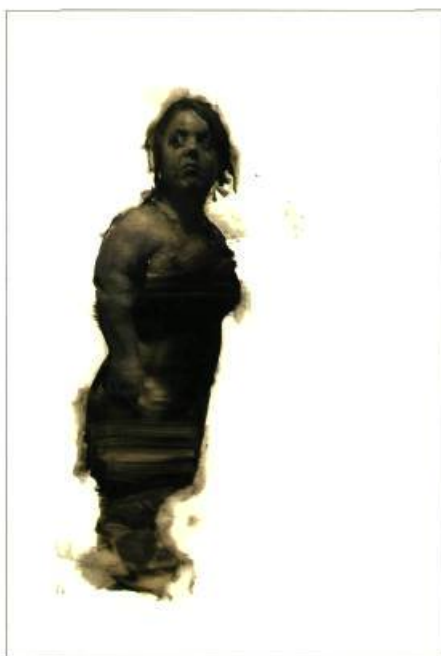
## SOPHIE JODOIN: DIARY OF K

Sept. 8 - October 3  
Edward Day Gallery  
952 Queen St. West  
Tel.: 416-921-6540  
www.edwarddaygallery.com

## CALGARY

## NEWZONES

Oct. 22 - Nov. 26  
730 Eleventh Ave.  
Tel. 403-266-1972  
Fax: 403-266-1987  
www.newzones.com



*Diary of K, #2 (detail)*, 2005  
oil on mylar  
Size 32 x 24"

Sophie Jodoin's latest studies of K, are a marked departure in terms of subject matter. While one always sensed a haunting sensibility, as if one

were only partially understanding the subject being painted, or could not entirely grasp the emotions of the people being portrayed or the atmospheres that accompanied them, now we feel increasingly hemmed in, like voyeurs staring at the subject – this person whose anatomy and bodily form is distinctly not the norm. And Sophie Jodoin has always had an incredible facility for depicting the human body and the specifics of anatomy. This gift is something she acquired in part from her studies at the New York Academy of Art. In a sense her current vision and approach are rather like that we see in pinhole photography, or through the optical lens of a door designed to provide safety to those within and afford a visual readability of whomever might be ringing at the door. The artist/voyeur is protected by an invisible layer of interpretation that somehow separates him or her from their potential subject.

The current series, referred to as *Diary of K: A Journal of Drawings*, are precisely that - notational studies achieved over time and in sequence like a journal of travel notes might do, and these visual studies likewise

reflect the passage of time. They are an on-going study of one person under different conditions and over time. As a series they appear to represent something potentially private that is exposed, and like the sketches on black paper of Jodoin's mother that preceded this series (which are on white paper), we sense this increasing objectification of things personal, that have sentiments, even spiritual attachments. Instead the denaturalization is accompanied by the sense these are fleeting studies, done in a time when speed (of the eye and hand) cause us to notice

details as smudges, small portions of clarity within a broader indistinct otherness.

K is presented from frontal, side and rear views, carefully watched, recorded. In Sophie Jodoin's own

words these works are... "The result of watching and making annotations about someone on a regular basis is quite similar to the work of an entomologist... K's particular dichotomy fascinates me – a strange mixture of monumentality and grandeur, fragility and vulnerability." Jodoin captures the details. Some fragment like a face, or a hand, or a foot, become a paraphrase for the sentiment of being there at a moment in time. Arms are folded for a moment, or the standing figure stretches proudly, even defiantly. One is reminded of Toulouse-Lautrec who sought out the unusual personages for his pastel works, or of Velasquez who likewise had a fascination for the unusual detail, that became a reflection of some greater sentiment, disguised and lacquered over, but nevertheless accurate in depicting the state of the world, even if so intimate. In Jodoin's case, the world is inverted, and the private becomes public and vice versa. Even more surprising are the larger charcoal sketches that accompany the more intimately scaled pieces. The larger charcoal works give us a sense of how Sophie Jodoin achieves these renditions of form in space, albeit on a flat surface, and arrives at the more intense, smaller crystallized studies of K. There is something of the austerity of Kathe Kollwitz, and something like spots of clarity in suspension amid a more generally aseptized and clinical atmosphere. It is an intimate, and vulnerable space Jodoin has brought to us viewer/voyeurs. This landscape is the body, a persona under intense scrutiny like a moth by a flame, is in a dance with light in the shadow of time.

John K. Grande

## ANDRÉ KERTESZ

Stephen Bulger Gallery  
1026 Queen St. W.  
M6J 1H6  
Tel.: 416-504-0575  
www.bulgergallery.com

André Kertesz, long considered one of the best "straight photographers developed his work to become something of an anomaly, and less stereotypical of that tendency than most. One is reminded of numerous of his classic photographs from Paris and New York, after he

moved there in 1935 and worldwide, when viewing this intimate and truly representative showing of his work.

Born in Budapest in 1894, Kertesz's legend as a photographer arose from his particularly human view of the world, and the European sensibility he brought to urban scenes, the still life and subject portrait. There was more than a little tinge of romanticism to his approach, as is evident from an early view of Budapest dated 1924. This was something that endeared his work to later post-war generations of people. As recondite a personality as you could meet, Kertesz was preoccupied with freelance commercial work in New York with magazines like *Harper's* and *Look*. He became known for the commercial work, and it hampered his experimental artistic side to a degree until he abandoned it for art photography.

Seldom seen in Canadian galleries, Kertesz's photograph on view at Stephen Bulger's Gallery include his vision of the Toronto skyline called *Smoke in Toronto* (1979), and *Washington Square in New York* (1966) from an aerial perspective. There are also a series of small contact prints (which was how Kertesz liked to print his photos in the 1930s). Works from the Paris period include well known still life's like *Mondrian's Glasses and Pipe, and Fork* (both from 1956).

Kertesz's renowned image *Satiric Dancer* is as immersed in the atmosphere of its era as any photo could be. Kertesz's New York close-ups of architecture and the urban landscape likewise bring a warmth to their subject. Kertesz could be considered a precursor to photographers Angela Grauerholz and even Lee Friedlander, for the way he personalizes the particular, adding a dash of history and personal poetic style to the everyday. Stephen Bulger Gallery deserves praise for bringing this selection of some 50 Kertesz photoworks to Canadian audiences. A modest grouping of original Kertesz photoworks, this show is well chosen. It provides viewers with a concise bird's eye view of this remarkable photographer's work.

John K. Grande

## ARNOLD SHIVES; QUEENSLAND

Engine Gallery  
1112 Queen St. West  
Tel.: 416-531-9905  
www.enginegallery.ca



Vancouver-based Arnold Shives' latest show at Engine Gallery draws on his experience visiting the Queensland region of Australia in 2004. As time passes, Shives who studied with Richard Diebenkorn and Nathan Oliveira in San Francisco is becoming one of a rare coterie of artists still working in their original visually expressive and colorist language unexpedited by the vagaries of contemporary visual fashion. Indeed it becomes increasingly clear that many artists no longer draw on their individual experience or the external world for their source content. Indeed a layering of pre-existing visual auditory or filmic material has increasingly developed a theory driven, heavy ballasted overloading of visual language. And so it is a relief to see an artist drawing his narrative consistently and with a pure visuality from his own real world visual tactile reality.

The *Queensland series* is visually eclectic, and develops a kind of aerial perspective, integrating fragments of relief printworks, adding them onto the surface, and playing with line and colour, in the overall composition. This child-like naiveté we see in a work such as *Estuary of the Tallebudgera* is truly reminiscent of David Hockney's *Painted Pools* series for its aquamarines, light desert-like colours influenced by the *cbroma* of the Australian environment. The difference, however, is that Shives writes visual experience, including many angles, multifaceted perspectives onto the picture plane. He does this with figuration. No effort is made to

abstract these competing elements as Picasso may have done. A coastline with water is symbolized by a series of repeating lines, a forested interior is generalized. In other sections of a painting we may read a series of patterns that are decorative, as seen in ceramic pots or textile design. The overall complexity that evolves as the areas are added to is one that equates for an inner state of being, for inner experience of the outer world. This almost psychological approach reminds one of Edvard Munch as a distant cue, and coloristically Richard

Diebenkorn from whom Shives drew a lot of inspiration much earlier in his career when he lived in San Francisco, the subject of an autobiographical book *The Valley of Melting Sand* published in 1999.

In a sense, Arnold Shives has gone full circle, awakening a stylist and expressive approach to landscape composition, not so distant and definitely related to Jack Shadbolt's approach to landscape, but without the allusions to a pure abstraction one sees with Shadbolt. indeed as Shives himself states in an exhibition note for the show, "The Engine Gallery exhibition, then, is a tribute to Australia, especially to the beaches and subtropical forests of southern Queensland... The work references the landscaper of eastern Australia, as well as Aboriginal art, but the references are rather tangential. ...I've employed as a unifying stylistic device stamps, that is, relief printing. The stamp technique harkens back to my decades-long involvement in printmaking. From time to time, the question has arisen: how do I mine those fruitful years of experience transferring images from matrix to substrate? I have used Queensland as an opportunity to explore that challenge."

Above all Arnold Shives' Queensland show evidences has evolved into an artist who style, his Matisse-like simplicity, is truly his own. The search for origins, for a kind of home, in various wilderness settings recalls another artist - the writer Malcolm Lowry who resided in nearby Dollarton, not far from Shives' North Vancouver studio. The simple graphic language of his art

has now spilt over from his print-making work for which he is renowned as one of Canada's most senior and gifted, into painting.

John K. Grande

## VICTORIA, B.C.

### RICK RIVET'S SPIRIT BOATS

August 1st – September 1st, 2005  
Alcheringa Gallery, 665 Fort Street  
Tel.: 250 393-8224  
www.alcheringa-gallery.com



*Beothuk Moundbow series #1*

Back in 1995 a Rick Rivet exhibition made it clear to me, for one, that he was among Canada's finest contemporary painters. Rivet's signature synthesis of Native themes and iconography merged with European painterly styles and sensibilities, both in roughly the same proportions,— an admirable demonstration of his Métis heritage. Rivet's blending of source visions are uniquely Canadian, for they blend these disparate backgrounds. Now a decade has passed and I am amending that perception slightly. I now find Rivet to be, in many ways, a quintessentially 'complete' Canadian painter/printmaker, continually evolving his specialised visual language of synthesis and transformation.

Over the course of his career, Rivet has visually chronicled and united timeless, indigenous, formal understandings with imported (European) perspectives to render his so very Canadian millennial concerns. Addressing an essentially Post-postmodern, cognitive paradigm, Rivet's paintings are an

educated response to the problems confronting a society whose best hope rests in integrating diverse belief systems, uniting pluralistic cultural foundations, and reconciling rationalistic and spirit-based intellectual traditions. Rivet's conscious fusion of representational styles can be compared to that of contemporary Native artists Jane Ash Poitras, Gerald McMaster, Joane Cardinal-Schubert and others.

Rivet was born in Aklavik, NWT, in 1949. He has studied, worked and taught art in communities across Canada. His signal iconography has naturally incorporated and synthesised cross-cultural themes and motifs, stylistic forms and philosophies. An abiding theme is that of the spirit journey — a migration of consciousness with its own iconographic lexicon and symbol set. It includes masks, shaman figures, pictographic ciphers,

handprints, labyrinth schematics and animal forms. The recurring boat form seen in Rivet's visual peregrinations can appear as if seen from above, or as a sectioned mandorla (or 'almond') shape. It even could be a boat hull seen from the side. The boat images function as windows, portals or doors, as shield images, or as funerary insignia. In Rivet's most recent series of small works, the *Beothuk Mound* series, it is this last aspect that emerges.

The *Beothuk Mound* series is a suite of monoprints in green, brown, or black inks. It is as if we, along with the dead, are looking out through the walls of the tomb — cut-away panels that have become transparent — fine as dust. The series seems to depict the interior of the tomb or burial vault, bringing the viewer into its cubic heart, where the signs and signals of the honoured dead have been supplied as grave offerings. Foremost among these pictographic images is the boat hull motif, an allusion to traditional skin boats used on the McKenzie River. The boat hull sign glows white or glowers darkly, depending on Rivet's shifting of the

values. It looms out of the far wall of the tomb, itself a 'starry vault' in Rivet's geocentric cosmology. Though planted deep in the earth, in the cosmological underworld of death and rebirth, the 'ceiling' panel, in many of the images, is strewn with stars. The ship form, supplied here, offers a vehicle or vessel for the dead. Like so many travellers in the afterlife before and since, they may safely embark upon their eternal soul's journey.

One is left with profound questions when one sees Rivet's work firsthand. Did the indigenous people of Newfoundland of the Beothuk Mound bury symbolic ship hulls with their honoured dead? When faced with an extinction event, did they, like Vikings, Celts, Anglo-Saxons or ancient Egyptians, inter their best hopes for cultural and personal revivification with the spirit travellers? Or is Rick Rivet, here and now in the 21st century, providing signs and symbols for a safe passage on the journey to rebirth, while also bringing these long-dead souls to life in our collective, Canadian memory?

Yvonne Owens

## BOOK

### THE FIGURATIVE SCULPTURE OF MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ BODIES, ENVIRONMENTS, AND MYTHS

by Joanna Inglot,  
University of California Press, 2004  
154 pp, with index, illustrated.  
www.ucpress.edu

This highly detailed account of Magdalena Abakanowicz's emergence out of communist Poland to becoming an international sculptor is both a rewarding read and provides some of the context with which the sculptor was working. As Abakanowicz once stated, infuriated that she was considered uniquely as a weaver early in her career: "I was weaving because it could be rolled up." The difficulties of pursuing a career in communist Poland often meant that artists had to disguise their protest or contestation in an underground language of art.

Abakanowicz was able to achieve some renown internationally precisely because she was a leader in taking weaving from the folk or traditional art realm into the contemporary sphere. Internationally recognized for her headless figures wrapped up in burlap, and the redolent forms referred to as Landscapes from the 1970s, Abakanowicz was able to travel out of communist Poland precisely because her medium of weaving was not considered politically dangerous, or even to be art. What is remarkable about this book are Inglot's detailed and insightful year to year accountings of Abakanowicz's life and art. Once a mere textile artist, Abakanowicz became renowned as a fibre sculptor. Her art carries echoes of the state socialist era, a part-biographical, part-social message that cannot escape the horrors nor realities of cultural identity under pressure from anomalous political forces. While more color images accompanying the text would have made *The Figurative Sculpture of Magdalena Abakanowicz: Bodies, Environments, and Myths* a more useful book in that text and image could be compared, the in depth analysis make it a pertinent and essential study for any follower of Magdalena Abakanowicz's art.

John K. Grande

