

## English Reports

David Garneau, John K. Grande, Virgil Hammock, Lori Beaman, Dorota Kozinska, Norman F. Cornett, Sophie Pilipczuk et Melissa Lam

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# WARHOL: LARGER THAN LIFE

Winnipeg Art Gallery,  
October 5-January 6, 2008

MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina,  
January 27 to April 20, 2008

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria,  
May 23 to August 20, 2008

Is it possible not to be an Andy Warhol fan? Not to know of him and recognize his signal images is to admit to a profound cultural ignorance. Even small children have heard of the Campbell's Soup guy. Of course, there is more. And a sure barometer of hipness is how much Warhol lore you can recite: not just the Pop, the silk screened multiple Marilyn's, the Brillo boxes, his silver wig, but also the underground movies; the superstars; the celebrity friends; the Factory; The Velvet Underground; Interview magazine; Valerie Solanas; Basquait; and all the wild stories. Understanding Warhol's achievements and knowing the tales is to be already inducted into his fan club.

I am a fan. I love reading about the Factory days and how three generations swirled around his still center. I have seen a few Warhol exhibitions and, while I understand his importance, appreciate his contributions and wish I had been there, the work is a let down. The eventual fate of all cool hunters, the shock of his appropriations, his mechanization and de-authoring, his pandering to the vanities of the rich have been absorbed by the system. The lore and his posture are much more interesting than the art.

At least, that is how I felt before seeing *Warhol: Larger than Life* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. My previous viewings had been in big-box galleries where the art was spread too thin and the irony—as in the Vancouver Art Gallery's show with attached gift shop—was spread too thick. The W.A.G.'s brutal wedge imprisons a stack of triangles subdivided into a windowless maze. The architectural heavy hand usually defeats more works of art than it serves but the Warhol exhibition manages to survive by sheer compressed will power.



*Self-portrait, 1986*  
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen  
Founding Collection, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh  
©Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts / SODRAC (2007)

Through a diplomatic coup, the W.A.G. gained unprecedented access to The Andy Warhol Museum vaults and, working with Helen Delacretaz, assembled an extraordinary survey of more than 150 paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, photographs, archival material and films. The works are shoehorned into a cavern of awkward angles. The merciful effect is to rob the exhibition of pomp and majesty and bring the work down to earth. The Elvis and Marilyn paintings read more like dorm posters than multi-million dollar works of com-

merce—which is probably more in line with Warhol's original intent.

The celebrity Polaroids and business letters contribute to the intimate feeling. It is as if you are rummaging through the Warhol estate (sale) rather than having his genius eased down your throat in a hushed cathedral. I especially appreciated the inclusion of his homoerotic drawings, whimsical commercial work and very early fumbblings that presage the Pop breakthrough. The show-your-work painting stencils are tangible reminders that Warhol's conceptual genius was paired with a crafty pragmatism.

Admirers of the "masterworks" will not be disappointed. Nor will those looking for the dark and intimate. There are even polite nods to our nationalism (campy portraits of Conrad Black, Gretzky, the Queen and other celebrities). *Warhol: Larger than Life* is a complete delight, an intimate block-buster sure to convert more fans.

David Garneau



# JOE FAFARD

Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina  
September 29, 2007  
to January 6, 2008

The National Gallery, Ottawa:  
February 1 to May 4, 2008



Cree Man

Joe Fafard is a prairie icon. He has rendered the local rural people, their livestock and lifestyle in ceramics, bronze and laser-cut steel for four decades. He is a populist who loves his subjects and is loved in return. The retrospective organized by the National Gallery's Terrence Heath, and shown first at Regina's Mackenzie Art Gallery, samples Fafard's prodigious output, pleases fans with favourites and impresses critics with his formal inventiveness.

Fafard's early ceramic sculptures are sober descendants of the California Funk movement (especially Robert Arneson). Unlike some of his colleagues' whacky, surreal confections, these scaled-down versions of his *Pense* neighbours are realistic and respectful. There is even a gentle political edge in inserting these ordinary, neglected people into the Canadian imaginary. A proud Fransaskois, Fafard offers glimpses into the lives of this dwindling founding community. His portraits of Aboriginal people are equally sensitive. The later sculptures of politicians are less interesting but may play better in Gatineau/Ottawa when the show gets to the National Gallery (Feb. 1-May 4, 2008).

While Fafard's subjects are bucolic but his approach is not Romantic. He is a deep feeler in the

vein of his artistic hero Van Gogh rather than a calculated sentimentalist like Norman Rockwell. He looks for character rather than cliché, mundane existential being rather than cute, nostalgic scenarios. None of his ceramic folk is sweet or beautiful. Their weathered faces are impassive, evidence that surrenders and confirms nothing but appearance. He is not a theorist but a sensitive observer who transfers experience rather than analyzes it.

While his signature anatomically correct cows and horses are fun, especially when set on urban lawns (the return of the repressed!), his distorted bovines are what really contribute to the formal language of sculpture. Their soft cubism and often horrific foreshortening combine shock and recognition. The laser-cut steel works are expedient silhouettes but are rarely as engaging as the knotted bronze drawings in space provided by the 'lost styrofoam' method. An occasional painter and huge fan of painters—many are homaged in the show—his best sculptures adapt painterly expressiveness and invention. In fact, he often finishes his ceramics not with glazes, or his bronzes with patina alone, but with acrylic paint. Unfortunately, no Fafard's paintings are included in the retrospective but a handful of lively drawings reveal his link not to folk art but to the 19<sup>th</sup> century French painting masters.

David Garneau

Holownia is an environmentalist as well as photographer. He has an incredible eye for those places where humanity interacts with nature, and where nature carries that memory still further. Capturing the scenery near Jolicure Pond (1996-2000), and then the expansive Tantramar Marshes for *Dyklands* (1989), a beautiful collaboration with the writer Douglas Lochhead published by McGill-Queen's Press, his *Anatomy of a Pipeline* exhibited at the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville explored the interface between industry and environment quite explicitly, but with an eye for the subtle shifts and changes that occur as a result of human intervention in less observed spaces and places. The trees around Henry David Thoreau's now semi-suburban but emblematic and symbolic Walden Pond (still a nature preserve to a degree) were re-visited by Holownia and these works continue to tour—a show opens at Winsor Gallery in Vancouver November.

More specifically, it was the stunted trees and environments generated by the climactic and topographical extremes of Newfoundland, the subject of *Ars Borealis*, a beautiful book production that involved a collaboration with the writer Peter Sanger that led to the moose bones, discovered in a natural site, intact and all there, and moved Holownia further than the topographical and environmental, to examine the relation between ourselves and other species that cohabit Canada with us. The botanical,

and species adaptation in this wild exposed park in the northern peninsula of Newfoundland included trees that have lived 2000 years, yet are only 5 feet tall. Hostile environments lead to new natural adaptations that are visually, experientially stunningly revealed in Holownia's photographs for *Ars Borealis*. People who live in such environments equally attract Holownia's attention.

Like the trees marked for cutting in the portrait styled *Walden Pond* series, other species such as migrating birds, turtles and frogs are wiped out in a more insidious and less immediately visible way by disruption of their environments, monoculture that wipes out natural habitats, and the climactic change accompanying global warming. For the current exhibition at the Jane Corkin Gallery in Toronto Distillery District, Thaddeus Holownia has actively preserved elements from the Newfoundland wilderness experience. Like a latter day Victorian collecting and exhibiting any number of curios brought back from nature (including the now extinct Dodo bird) in their cabinet of curiosities or living rooms, the vestiges of colonialism, Holownia now catalogues the bones of an entire moose, a majestic animal who thrives quite well in Newfoundland (half a million on the rock I believe) as a photographer might species in another century.

The difference here is that *Anatomy Lesson - Moose* (2006) required a new less-anthropological, and more animated method of pre-

## TORONTO

### THADDEUS HOLOWNIA

#### ANATOMY LESSON

Corkin Gallery  
55 Mill St. - Building 61  
Tel. 416 979-1980  
www.corkingallery.com  
Sept. 20 - Nov. 4, 2007

Living in Jolicure, New Brunswick with a family, horses, dogs, cats and "other creatures that creep out of the beautiful Tantramar Marshes"—a place that attracts a range of bird species and that also houses the C.B.C. international transmission station, Thaddeus



Anatomy Lesson  
Courtesy Corkin Gallery



sensation than mere visual recording. The entire body of bones (that had sit in Holownia's studio for several years) became a wall grid of photos numbering one hundred in total. Presented as a collectivity, this anatomical photo assemblage seems so different in conception than the bone-like sculptures Henry Moore made, for these visual perceptual abstractions of bones stem from an actual living reality, link us to a specific event. *Anatomy Lesson* references structure, but a structure now dislocated, and that dislocation now assembled, re-recorded becomes an expression of the gap or distance that now exists between our mediated lives and the natural world. And this is the strength of Thaddeus Holownia's Toronto show, witnessed by an urban Toronto audience, conceivably more sensitive to nature than those rural or marginal people who live in nature's scope.

Others works on view investigate various grain species including *Flax, Soya, Rye, Oats, Wheat, and Canola*. Like Holownia's earlier *Ironworks* photos that presented the tools of an ironsmith in a simple, unambiguous way, as object/implements of human production from a bygone era, the grains in *Staff of Life* are near Biblical. Presented on simple dark backgrounds, these photos recall the presentational photographs of the German photographer Karl Blossfeldt, but the emphasis is less on nature's design here. Their isolation in the image, and unique character raise questions about genetic modification, threatened species and plant diversity, and world hunger. Thaddeus Holownia's photographic images play on and with the image. Is it a photograph or photograph?

Is the image more than the real life element? These images are very conscious of the traditions of photography, and yet recognize the contemporary situation, the effects and changes going on in the world that surrounds us. Nature, the main source of our well being and sustenance, is brought back into focus as an element that sustains even the lens of our vision.

John K. Grande

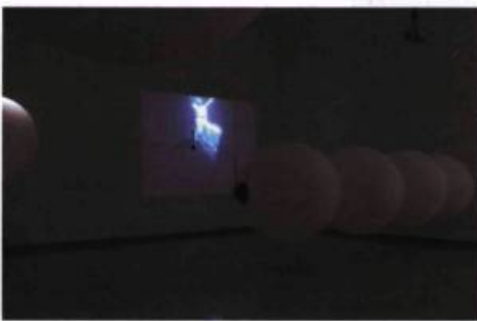
## SACKVILLE, NB

### GLYNIS HUMPHREY

#### BREATHING UNDER WATER

The Owens Art Gallery  
Sackville, NB

27 October – 9 December 2007



Breathing Under Water  
Installation

Whenever an exhibition catalogue essay babbles on about an artist's practice I usually find the work in the exhibition to be as dense and as uninteresting as the offending essay. That is not the case with Glynis Humphrey's installation *Breathing Under Water* which, despite the obfuscation of the catalogue text, is a breathtakingly beautiful work. In its current manifestation at the Owens Art Gallery the work occupies the entire space of the Owens's high wall gallery. This two story tall space is often a difficult area to use well in the display of conventional art works, but it serves Humphrey's installation admirably.

The work ingeniously marries sound and sight. The gallery is darkened. There are number of weather balloons suspended from the ceiling and, on one wall, there is a screen on which a video is projected of a woman, the artist, floating in a tank of water breathing with the help of some sort of a device. You hear the audio sounds of video and that is not all as touch is important in this installation. There are speakers attached to the balloons and if you touch them you can feel what appear to be a heart beat. I am told that some viewers feel anxiety when in the presence of this work and others feel a sense of clam. I am

squarely in the latter. *Breathing Under Water* relaxes me which is odd, as non-swimmer or, at least, not a very good one, I have a natural fear of being under water. The artist states, in an interview in the catalogue, that she has a similar fear of water. I can understand those with aqua-phobia uncomfortable with the work.

There is, however, another take with this work. It can be likened to a return to the womb which, believe me, is very comfortable. I can be accused of reading too much in to this work, but the darkness, the water sounds and the heart beat all suggest the comfort of the womb. It is a good thing that this installation can be viewed in many different ways by different people. There is a strong feminist case made by the artist in the catalogue interview as well as in the essays in the catalogue. Humphrey speaks about the non ideal body type, her own, which is, of course, the subject in the video. Her body type did not matter to me. Maybe it is just the colour, the bubbles, the sounds or the mood I was in when I entered the installation, but I found the video to be strangely beautiful.

This exhibition was first shown in Montreal at La Centrale in the fall of 2005 and at Mount Saint Vincent in Halifax in March of 2006. *Breathing Under Water* was just named the winner of the \$25,000 Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Arts Award for 2007. I hope, now that it has won this award, that the exhibition will be toured nationally. Each of the three showings of the installation thus far have been different because of the size and shape of the three galleries. I cannot imagine that spaces can be found that is as good as the one at Mount Allison's Owens Art Gallery, but this is an exhibition that should be seen (and heard and felt) by more people.

Virgil Hammock

## OTTAWA

### TONY FOUHSE

#### USER

Galerie La Petit Mort  
306 Cumberland St.  
Ottawa

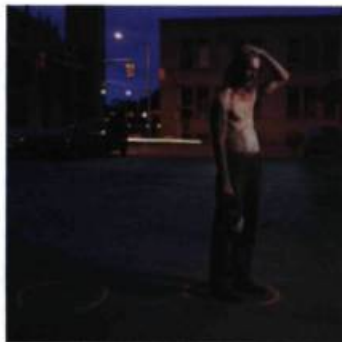
Tel: 613 860-1555

www.Lapetitmortgallery.com

To: November 2–December 2, 2007

In second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Édouard Manet used controversial techniques and subject matter which moved visual art from the realm of the romantic to the realm of the real. Taking as his subject scenes of everyday life, he scandalized Paris society by insisting through his work that art must be about day-to-day life of ordinary Parisiens, including those who lived on the margins. This focus on the ordinary and the marginal drew to the attention of the viewing population (including the Salon elite) those aspects of life which they preferred not to see, such as that depicted in his *The Absinthe Drinker*.

Tony Fohse does much the same thing in his exhibition of 14 photographs entitled "User". Each image is a photograph of one or two of his subjects—Yvon is included with this review. Drawing his subjects from an area of Ottawa known to be a congregating place for crack users and prostitutes, Fohse has created a body of work that brings the viewer into intimate contact with the people who frequent this less promoted area of the National Capital Region. While his work presents an entry point into the lives of his subjects, as "users", Fohse immerses the viewer in the world of the subject as a whole person—with



Yvon



hopes and dreams juxtaposed against the starkness of their realities. Paradoxically, this starkness of the images alludes to an otherness of the subject, with overtones of mysticism in the tradition of renaissance religious art at the same time as it destroys the barrier between subject and viewer, encouraging, perhaps forcing, a relationship. The "us"/"them" divide is deconstructed with the opportunity to linger and, in the process, to confront a shared existence.

Is the relationship developed illusory? A one sided panoptic gaze that only serves to reinforce the distanced and safe bifurcation of "us" and "them"? A replaying of the voyeuristic moment that is so popular in our over-sanitized society? Fohse protects his subjects from voyeurism and distancing through his admittedly (and obviously) contrived poses and his deliberate use of twilight as that moment between light and dark when both more and less is visible. His clever use of light and pose serves to play on romanticism's beauty, but does not encourage the viewer to rest there, but rather to move to a place of common ground of shared humanity.

From a pragmatic perspective, Fohse's work addresses a subject that has been controversial for the past decade in Canada—what do municipalities do with "users" and those who live and work on the streets? This work completely de-centres that question by inverting our experience of the "User", displacing the viewer to the margins.

Lori Beaman

## OSHAWA

### LEGH MULHALL KILPIN

VERSATILE PAINTERLY HISTORIC ART!

Robert McLaughlin Gallery  
72 Queen St.-Civic Centre  
www.rmg.on.ca

Sept. 14th – Nov. 11th

Within the history of Canadian art, there are a variety of significant artists whose works do not entirely fit into the scope of history as we



Marie Paddling to Eric  
Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 56 cm  
Courtesy Langley Centennial Museum

have defined it. One of these was Legh Mulhall Kilpin. While his art is largely Victorian in taste, it develops in Canada along a series of strands that reveal a talented artist with diverse capabilities. While Kilpin arrived in Canada rather late in life at age 52, settling in Montreal in 1906, it was here in Quebec and Canada that Kilpin had the chance to move beyond the narrow, academic and constrained styles he had been taught never to waver from in England. The English art critic and one time champion of J.M.W. Turner, John Ruskin actually criticized the English art training system precisely because it was out of date, not up with the times.

Curated by Roger Boulet in British Columbia, the present McLaughlin Gallery show presents works ranging from standard landscape, to near deco-design, to accomplished portraiture, and even monotype and printmaking efforts that are as edifying as any Canadian or Quebec artists works of the era. This show gives the audience a glimpse of a less well known side of Canadian and Quebec art, of the artists who achieved a great deal, yet somehow did not fit the historian's model of what a significant artists was or should be. This show obliges one to conclude that Legh Mulhall Kilpin was highly talented, but endlessly applied his skills as a painter to the diverse circumstances that arose. He adapted his considerable and abundant painterly skills to the occasion as it permitted, but his was always a somewhat conservative approach to the medium. This was much what the Quebec sculptor

Louis Jobin had to do with sculptural commissions, necessity being the mother of invention!

Montreal Technical School, a place that favoured commercial design work, and a more forward looking use of arts skills, was the place Kilpin taught from 1912 to 1919, and he produced some fine deco-inspired works that exemplify the *beaux-arts* yet modern approach that Montreal adopted in this and other institutions. Exhibiting with the Art Association of Montreal, Kilpin painted portraits of many personages of the era including Chancellor Bethune, John Ogilvy, John Bowles Learmont, and Lady van Horne. Maurice Cullen invited Kilpin to join the Montreal Arts Club where he joined A.Y. Jackson, John Lyman and Randolph Hewton (artists disliked by Montreal critics of that era for their post-Impressionist approach to painting!).

*The Crystal Gazer*, an undated painting has that Symbolist, quasi-spiritual character and depicts a young woman dressed in white gown holding a crystal ball, a lamp behind her. The overall flavour of this piece is akin to works by Charles Eastlake, or Dante Gabriel Rossetti, though Blakean vision surface in his designs. Unlike Ozias Leduc's symbolism, Kilpin's is less personal, more a simple adaptation of themes already seen and popularized. What emerges from seeing the range and volume of Kilpin's output while in Canada is his incredible skill and adaptability. An undated canoe scene *Marie Paddling to Eric* or *In Flanders Fields* (1919) shows Kilpin well versed in the Canadian themes and among the best at relaying them to a public.

John K. Grande

## MONTREAL

### VIK MUNIZ

REFLEX: A VIK MUNIZ PRIMER

Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art  
185 Ste. Catherine Str. W., Montreal  
Tel.: 514 847-6226  
www.macm.org

October 3, 2007 – January 6, 2008

Vik Muniz is adorable on the video accompanying a major exhibition of his works at the MAC. He plays and frolics with local children in foreign places. He is all smiles and ardent innocence. It makes it just so much harder to question his art.

In street vernacular, 'bad' actually means really good, and that paradox weaves through the Brazilian artist's oeuvre and, if what he does is urban art, becomes its saving grace.

Muniz has been exhibiting internationally for two decades, but he is best known for appropriating famous figures and cultural icons for his, often hilarious, renditions in such material as chocolate, caviar, sugar, and just plain junk.

The idea is far from original. Numerous contemporary artists have sought to execute works of art in materials other than traditional, at times crossing the line of good taste.

Not so with Muniz, unless the sight of *Medusa Marinara* at the entrance to the exhibition hall turns your stomach.



Valicia Bathes in Sunday Clothes  
(Sugar Children), 1996  
Gelatin silver print, 35.6 x 27.9 cm  
Courtesy Sikkoma Jenkins & Co., NYC

From Mona Lisa in peanut butter and jelly, to the Creature from the Black Lagoon made of caviar, food seems to be Muniz's material of choice in many of the works on display.

A master of many mediums, he is primarily a photographer, constructing and reconstructing faces and works of art in various materials, photographing them, and then destroying the original 'set'.



Artists like Holly King or David Moore have applied the same formula, producing photographic impressions of already non-existent compositions.

But before we can dismiss it as gimmick, we ought to find the philosophy underlying Muniz's seemingly absurd constructs.

He is first and foremost a people's artist; the public loves him, and he repays in spades. His art amuses and provokes, it makes us think and question our myriad responses to it.

He is culturally versatile, a global artist, whose travels are as integral to his creative process as the very act itself.

If accessibility were a prerequisite to fame, Muniz certainly delivers. But what he delivers is far more serious than most think. His work speaks of the whole idea of representation in art, and draws attention away from the final product to the very act of making it.

The dazzle of a Marlene Dietrich executed in diamonds cannot distract from the fascination of trying to imagine the labour that went into creating this portrait. Action Photo (after Hans Namuth) of Jackson Pollock dribbling paint onto canvas 'drawn' in chocolate provokes similar bewilderment.

The high resolution of Muniz's photographs further adds to the surreal aspect of his images. This is a new reality, and it makes us a tad uncomfortable all the while amusing us.

Giggles cease, however, in front of a series called the Sugar Children. There is something unbearably poignant in these portraits of children from the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, and rightly so, for behind their smiling faces lies a life of hardship and struggle. Backbreaking labour on sugar cane plantations is the lot of their parents, a fact that did not escape the artist who befriended them.

The snapshots he took of his new pals soon were transformed in portraits drawn in sugar brought back from the island.

There are six of them in the series, all identified by name. They stand out from the rest of the works on display – and this is a very large show – as homage to the models,

and a testament to the power of art, no matter how contemporary, or in what medium.

It forces us to take a second look at Muniz, and a third, and more, for this is art with heart on its sleeve, and laughter in its belly.

Dorota Kozinska

## MARION WAGSCHAL

### 'SOME GIRLS'

McClure Gallery  
350, avenue Victoria  
Montreal, Quebec  
H3Z 2N4  
Tel.: 514 488-9558  
Email: info@centredesartsvisuels.ca  
www.visualartscentre.ca

07 September – 29 September 2007

Marion Wagschal clearly perceives the body as the cornerstone of human existence. She accordingly grounds her work in the basal corporeality of humanness. With down-to-earth realism she trenchantly observes that, "Skin is all we see of people." No wonder her art attests that the human drama unfolds in the theatre of mortal flesh.

Wagschal depicts the dramatic personae of the human life cycle through a series of four portraits in the collective exhibition, 'Some Girls,' at the McClure Gallery, curated by James D. Campbell.

First, 'Baby' pictures a newborn that sets one's teeth on edge. Rather than serenely contemplating a cherub asleep, the viewer winces at the sight of an infant screaming at the top of their lungs – as amply illustrated by their wide-open mouth, tightly shut eyes, and flared nostrils.



Pulcharella 2  
Acrylic on canvas, 14" x 16"

These features betoken temperament, and thus serve to impart psychological identity to an otherwise anonymous, nondescript neonate. Eschewing therefore an idyllic, and ultimately generic image of babyhood, the artist instead portrays infancy as a primal angst that articulates individuality.

Second, 'Girl' paints a juvenile in the red-brown-yellow spectrum of ochre. From the crown of her head to the tip of her chin lies a median, signified by a marked parting in her hair, and a noticeable gap between her two front teeth. On either side of this division nothing quite matches, so that one eye, its brow, and socket, asymmetrically appear larger than their vis-à-vis. These disjunctive facial features in effect deconstruct the threefold template of visual harmony and physical perfection as corollaries of beauty. Further, the subject's vacant, if not vacuous look, calls into question the substantialness of beauty.

Third, 'Blonde' goes the distance in subverting the archetypal, fair-headed, feminine beauty of popular culture. Through painterly necromancy Wagschal conjures up a hag with sulphury, sparse, lichen-like hair, deeply furrowed forehead, steely eyes, elephant ears, toothless gums, wrinkled jowls, mottled complexion, and shriveled skin that nearly flakes off the canvas. In sum, from its ironic name to its palpable coloration, this piece devastatingly critiques blonde stereotypes.

It also problematizes ageing so as to integrate this development into understanding the condition of women. Wagschal's serial approach to their representation effectually argues for a transcendent view of womanliness rather than a perspective that confines femininity to certain physical phenomena. In fact, nothing but the title indicates that 'Blonde' represents a woman, so that it defies the assumption that femininity, like beauty, 'is only skin deep.'

However, Wagschal recognizes full well that age implacably takes its toll since she etches mortality into every brushstroke of 'Blonde,' and thereby paves the way for its ineluctable sequel, 'Dead.' Unlike her predecessor, the deceased possesses abundant hair, but this ashen

coif grimly underlines the jaundiced-grey flesh tone that certifies her death. Indeed, rigor mortis seemingly stiffens the lips and locks the jaws of her gaping mouth.

Wagschal looks death in the face. She refuses to romanticize it, nor even give quarter to nostalgia. In her own words she simply "records" it. This artist's unflinching gaze tests our mettle and proves hers.

Norman F. Cornett, ph.d.

## MONA MARIANA CICIOVAN

### LES DIALOGUES DE LA MEMOIRE

Galerie ARTE Montreal  
2154, rue Crescent  
Montreal  
Tel.: 514 285-1611  
www.artemontreal.org

7 November – 4 December 2007



La grande ville  
Courtesy: Galerie Arte Montreal

The quiet aesthetic of Mona Mariana Ciciovan's paintings is what first invites the viewer for a closer inspection. Consistent in tone and structure, they exude a warm, almost caressing aura with their ochre and sepia palette.

Ciciovan's roots are Romanian, her creative inspirations universal, and her style all her own.

*Les Dialogues de la Mémoire* series of recent works focuses entirely on cityscapes, paintings that resemble fragments of a larger tableau excised from the landscape with staccato brushstrokes, reconfigured on canvas with light and colour.



As much drawings as paintings, they offer sketchy outlines seemingly without perspective, as if the memory of the place folded onto itself in translucent layers. We can see right through the bridges and the cathedral domes, through the shimmering canals and pale skies.

Some cityscapes look familiar although the artist avoids naming them in her titles, and rightly so, for they have taken on a life of their own, and now belong to a different realm.

*La cité de glace* is just that; a landscape composed seemingly of icicles, dripping brushstrokes that slide off the canvas like frost on a windowpane.

Paradoxically, it exudes warmth, deliciously tricking our senses.

In *L'usine*, delicate electrical lines like floating filaments envelop a block of concrete buildings, rigid against a grey sky. Ciciovan's talent lies clearly in evoking strength and delicacy within a single composition, subverting, redefining the mode of presenting architectural scenes. Her vistas are lyrical evocations, relying on the sense of the visual and the visceral to compose the image. Spontaneous, unencumbered, her paintings still remain grounded in their composition and setting.

As if caught by the sun's fading rays, *La grande ville* glows with burnt red and warm sepia. The city's outlines are sketched with delicate, fine lines, superimposed on the colour patches that make up the buildings. Perhaps the most abstract of all the works, it intrigues and lures with hidden niches of shadow that lurk beneath the structures.

The exhibition's eponymous work, *Dialogues de la mémoire*, seems to be composed of three separate landscapes, taking the eye on a visual journey from a dense, deep red cluster of buildings, across an expanse of translucent water towards a sweeping bridge, and on to a faraway outline of an island city.

It may be New York, it may be Manhattan, but truly, it does not matter. The pleasure of viewing Ciciovan's urban magic is purely aesthetic. It is not even emotional, but rather reflective, a brief glimpse before gently receding back into the memory.

Dorota Kozinska



ALEXANDRE MASINO

MATIÈRE D'ÊTRE

Galerie de Bellefeuille  
1367, avenue Greene  
Montreal  
Tel.: 514 933-4406  
www.debellefeuille.com

October 25 – November 5, 2007

Galerie de Bellefeuille has a knack for snaring the best Concordia University's Fine Arts department has to offer. From Tom Hopkins through Paul Fenniak to Fabien Jean, the list is long.

Although in the case of the latest artist on exhibit, Alexandre Masino, 'snaring' might not be the right word and should perhaps be replaced by the more appropriate 'cultivated'.

A Concordia University, Bachelor in Fine Arts graduate with distinction, and a one-time employee of the gallery, Masino has been honing his creative skills under the watchful eye of Jacques Bellefeuille for some time, while continuing to show his works in other venues.

In great strides he has developed his own visual lexicon, taking as his medium the highly demanding, and equally rewarding, technique of encaustic.

There is something extremely sensual and tactile in the combination of wax and panel, and together with Masino's choice of subject matter, his latest works usurp a particular place on the contemporary art scene.

They have also taken over Galerie de Bellefeuille, and the homecoming was predictably *chaleureux*.

*Brumes lumineuses*  
Encaustic on panel, 23" x 32"  
Courtesy: Galerie de Bellefeuille

Still life and landscape vie for attention in this exuberant and exciting exhibition. The exuberance belongs to the artist, the excitement to the critic, for there is something most encouraging in viewing artwork that harks back to the days of quality and craftsmanship.

Still clearly the work of a young artist, Masino's still life compositions rely largely on the medium, the deep pigment and heavily textured surface, to carry the image. Ochre pears and pale garlic, heavy melon wedges are almost suspended in space, the surface on which they rest but marked by their own shadow. The monochromatic foreground and background provide a kind of lit screen against which the objects are exposed.

Somewhere among them, standing out with awkward bashfulness is a pair of scuffed shoes, the artist's humble homage to van Gogh. Titled aptly *Pèlerinage des souliers*, this painting 'shuffles' back in time with its static composition and subject matter, and the mastery of the medium.

Far more intriguing, however, are Masino's landscapes, focusing on hilly crags and mountain lakes. Misty and lyrical, they are captivating, almost metaphysical meditations on space.

Executed in cool blues and greys, these paintings are like illustrations from a Zen book, quiet, celestial abodes in which the spirit of nature resides.

While focused on the gentle poetry of the landscape, these are introspective works that seem to be born of that special inner sanctum that is the artist's vision.

They offer silent refuge, as in the sliver of turquoise pool among oblique boulders in *Siècle en siècle*, or the sloping vista of mountain and sky in *Au seils du temps*.

But it is in *Breumes lumineuses* that Masino really shows his talent. This almost abstract tableau of metaphysical proportions, composed seemingly of air and an invisible energy, is executed with astounding delicacy of gesture and intuitive suspension of forms. It has the feel of antiquity and the surreal, lifting the viewer to a realm that only art, and the artist's soul, can provide.

Dorota Kozinska

## HALIFAX, NS

### MICHEL DE BROIN

SOBEY ART AWARD

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia  
Halifax Downtown Site  
1723 Hollis Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3C8  
Tel.: 902 424-7542  
www.agns.gov.ns.ca

Held annually the Sobeys Art Award offers a \$50,000 prize to one of 5 Canadian artists under 40. The accompanying exhibition showcases this exciting talent. Past winners include Brian Jungen, Jean-Pierre Gauthier and Annie Pootoogook. This year's winner is Quebec's Michel de Broin. Other finalists were Shary Doyle (Ontario) Jean-Denis Boudreau (Atlantic Canada), Ron Terada (West Coast) and Rachelle Viader Knowles (Prairies and North)



Michel de Broin  
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia  
Photo: Steve Farmer



Upon entering gallery 1 at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia my gaze is immediately drawn to one of De Broin's works. Resembling a scientific model of some strange and potentially deadly molecule the black sphere has tremendous presence and not solely due to its size (parts of the gallery ceiling had to be removed to accommodate it). De Broin has reconfigured materials that reference society and its systems while paradoxically creating a representation of the microscopic. This inversion calls attention to the usually linear nature of our perception. The sculpture is made of stackable chairs (think corporate seminar room) legs pointing outward towards the viewer. Aggression or defence, the spikiness is electric and active. Its title conveys images of spatial phenomena and unity verging on totalitarianism. I watched people give *Black Whole Conference* the wide berth afforded to the virulent and be drawn toward the neon glow of Ron Terada's *Severe High Elevated Guarded Low*; words in the colours of the US homeland security advisory system installed on chain link fence (pop art gone creepy.) On one side of the fence: a border crossing sign (found art- ready made) You Have left the American Sector; on the other in giant vinyl letters mimicking graffiti: *Who Watches The Watchmen?* Mass communication, language, context, and artistic authorship are at the core of Terada's work.

Boudreau also uses vinyl, step by step how to illustrations of rail holding or stair climbing applied to the wall. The works are funny, successfully addressing our society's desperate tendency toward idiot proofing and dumbing things down. His *Dismorphic Prosthetic* and upside down cotton candy and ice cream carts complete with balloons (gravity not helium fans them out) and drip bucket (for the "melting" ice cream) question what is assumed normal by carrying out what if scenarios.

The selection representing Shary Boyle gives a true sense of the multifaceted nature of her practice. From fluid and vital overhead projector collaborations with musicians (Doug Paisley, Feist) in which her drawings on transparencies are

layered and resemble animated stained glass windows to be danced in front of in costume; we then move on to more concrete forms in the deliberately overworked and awkward drawings on paper and finally to paintings and the figurines that have garnered her much attention. Hand painted porcelain bisque, unique and horribly fragile they are the embodiment of the exquisite and nightmarish.

Finally Rachelle Viader Knowles video works present other people's stories. There is a real sense of attachment that develops toward these "neighbourhood characters". In *The Future* the footage has been doubled and mirrored (think super wide screen). English row houses frame the shot and create a classic one-point perspective. The point de fuite is hidden by a bushy tree. On either side of the tree the same boy sits on an ivy covered wall regaling us with stories about his circumstances, his past (best trips), his future (in New York) while eating ice cream. Sound and very clever editing carry us from one side to the other while in the background laundry is hung, clouds move through a blue sky and an old man brings an ice cream. Divorce, urbanization and pollution are larger themes that appear. Viader Knowles work is refreshingly subtle and reflects the many dimensions and layers that make up who we are.

Sophie Pilipczuk

## HONG KONG

### JULIAN SCHNABEL IN HONG KONG

10 Chancery Lane Gallery  
Showing at 6/F West Warwick House,  
Taikoo Place, 979 King's Road,  
Island East (MTR Quarry Bay, Exit A)

Schnabel unlike anybody else you make this cliché statement about is someone that you *actually* love to hate or can't help loving. Critical reviews of his paintings have always been hotly divided. In one breath, the historical importance of his work will be cited as bringing back the rich vitality and color of painting after the rarified *Minimalist*



*The conversion of St. Paolo de Malfi*  
Oil, resin and gesso on canvas,  
304 x 457 cm

world of the 70s, while in the next, he will be damned for gimmick painting, an *enfant terrible* attitude and undeserved popularity. It was this same fantastic popularity in the 1980s which secured him a Whitney Museum retrospective at the age of 36 and now at 56, currently nets him over \$500,000 USD per painting.

"Schnabel in Hong Kong" is a mini-retrospective exhibition documenting the beginning of Schnabel's small forage into the woodlands of Asia or more specifically, the powerhouse of China. There are a variety of Schnabel paintings on exhibition here ranging from renditions of the famous cracked plate works, appropriations of found landscape art painted over, to varnished female forms, celebrity portraits of Marlon Brando as well as a couple of works from his bleak landscape series. Schnabel's manifestations are both dizzying in range and in sheer monumental scale—most of the paintings top 250 x 300 cm. Many of his paintings reference the female form—"Portrait of Olatz with Cy" is a typical example of the imbued references Schnabel puts into his cracked plate paintings—the dishes are house ware and the mother's hands are deliberately broken into 4 sections alluding to fragmented domesticity.

The bleak landscape series is particularly poignant, especially in the paintings that lack text. For Schnabel, language in painting acts as a form of self-conceit, they transform the abstract in his work into more figurative representation. An example of this is "The Conversion of St. Paolo de Malfi" which has the title scrawled across the centre of the

painting immediately infixing all abstract objects in the work with the religious connotations of the heading. Schnabel often relies on text in his work to elicit crucial explosions of sensation and response. Often, his titles act as provocative previews into his work: "Speed Mitten" has the artist's white projectiles hurling across the canvas; "View of Dawn in the Tropics" has the inky blood words of the title dripping across a white matte canvas. For me however, it is the untitled black paintings in particular that are especially moving as they lack the onslaught of scrawled inky text splayed across the canvas. Lazaro Gomez Carriles (1998) in particular appeals with the three dimensional contrast between the folds and lines of the imprint coupled with the rough quality of the string. Bleak and alluring, the dirty cream explosions in the painting are especially contrasted with the bright white splattered on top of the grey canvas.

Schnabel and Francis Bacon are not usually heard together in the same sentence but looking around, one spies the gruesome painterly quality of Bacon's exaltation in Schnabel's early work. "Untitled" (Black Painting) in particular features a gruesome murky vortex whirling towards the surface of the painting and sinisterly trailing over the frame." The "Schnabel in Hong Kong" exhibition acts as a great introduction to the vast oeuvre of his work and will travel to Seoul, at the Hyundai Gallery, and the Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art.

Melissa Lam



# IRENE F. WHITTOME

WORDS DO NOT MATTER

Galerie Simon Blais  
5420, boul. Saint-Laurent  
Montreal  
Tel.: 514 849-1165  
www.galeriesimonblais.com  
October 10 – November 10, 2007

Artist, respected teacher, Irene F. Whittome is the *grande dame* of Canadian contemporary art scene. Master printmaker, recipient of numerous awards crowned with the Order of Canada (2005), she has exhibited her works in numerous museums, including Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art and the Musée du Québec.

Followings on the heels of a major retrospective, *Paperworks III*, at Galerie Simon Blais two years ago, Whittome is once again exhibiting her most recent works in the same venue.

Inspired by the scenery surrounding her new studio in Stanstead, an abandoned quarry that she purchased in 2005, these works on paper are a continuation of the artist's *démarche* in the field of visual art.

Fine strips of paper with words printed in German run like a grid over the canvas, glued to its surface in some works, or attached loosely in other, creating a three-dimensional space.

There is the ever-present fragility, and an intellectual undercurrent that is apparent in all of Whittome's creations.

From the silent scream of a giant turtle in *Curio*, to the DNA inspired images from *Paperworks*, she invests her art with a profound emotional and metaphysical element.

Standing in the middle of the gallery, surrounded by her latest works, she is hesitant in explaining the process.

"What you have here is myself and all the vulnerability of that. It was a risk, but I thought, now I can put myself out there on that level saying 'life is fragile, words are fragile, everyone is searching now for something that probably can't be found', we are in that transitional period, so it's about that fragility. A sort of a cry out..."

Is there a connection to the *Curio* installation, to the soundless scream emanating from the open mouth of the turtle sitting on a closed copy of a Latin Dictionary?

"I think I pick up there with the cry. The turtle could be a metaphor for myself, and then the mouth open but there was no noise, it was just open. You couldn't hear it, it was muffled inside. So there is a similarity here, the tape holding the words in. The words are hidden, concealed, but there is that cry."

There is also a healing process inherent in these works. An idea of repair, of taping to hold together, not only to stifle?

"Yes, there's a tear so what do you do? You repair. We need something tangible. We need to almost be taken in our arms, that type of protection and that type of warmth."

Was working on these latest installations a healing process for the artist herself?

"Everything that I am is in my work. My intelligence, everything through my experience. I process it and give it in my work. As an individual, it's totally different. The artist, the work and the individual are so separate, and maybe through the work there is some intelligence that tell you this is the tone."

The exhibition is very quiet, monochromatic, somewhat in defiance of or deference to the profound message it carries. Was she not afraid it might not come through?

"Certainly not everyone is going to get that, because the Internet has made visual art so banal. It sucked the life out of visual arts because people go on line to see an exhibition. We are in a bad patch right now, but it will come back. It has to come back.

"I find that in silence and non-action and stillness I can understand and feel those things. And what I'm going to do with them is another thing. Individually we all have to contribute to that. I reached a point in my life where I ask, what can I do now to contribute and still remain myself and still add something to what is already there."

For an artist, what does it mean to contribute?

"Realising that as an artist is to hang in there and just keep working, and go as deep as you can in where you've chosen to be and just wait.

"I see it through mythology. If you're going to jump on the back of that tiger, you've got to be able to hang on to it. So make sure, if you do that, you have to grab the tail and not fall off.

"It's a long, long ride."

Dorota Kozinska



Carrière Ogden,  
Stanstead, 2005  
Photo: Françoise Cloutier