

## TORONTO OUTDOOR ART EXHIBITION 08

**Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition 2008** (Nathan Phillips Square, July 11-13)[Home](#)[Who Do I Think I Am?](#)[Index: Movies](#)[Index: Books](#)[Index: Theatre](#)[Index: Music](#)[Index: Exhibitions](#)[Index: TV, Radio and Misc](#)TORONTO OUTDOOR  
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The bad news about this year's TOAE is that the overall quality of the work is much lower than in past years. For some reason, the show's organizers have apparently decided to go for a more populist approach. So we get lots of booths this year with tacky content like stuffed animals, woolly purses, funny hats. The pity is that many good painters, I'm told, were rejected by the jurors in order to make room for the crafty stuff. Granted, there should be fairs where the populace can acquire that kind of thing if wanted, but it's sad to see such kitsch elbowing out really fine art when there are already so few opportunities for good artists to sell their high-quality work.

Still, there was some of it on view. Readers of *Dilettante's Diary* will recognize the names of some favourite artists from past shows:

David Brown, not surprisingly, is on hand with his marvellous encaustic (wax) paintings, mostly abstractions of cityscapes and landscapes in striking colours. This year, Mr. Brown trails clouds of glory from Montreal's *Festival International en Arts* where he was awarded the Visual Arts Prize for Abstract Art. The prize recognizes, not just one painting, but his body of work.

As shown in his pastels and oils, Tim Daniels, has surely one of the keenest eyes of any artist hereabouts when it comes to the beauty of composition and execution. With stunning effect, he pulls off something as simple as a tin can containing white flowers with a dash of electric blue blossoms among them. One of his pastels that drew me in was a moody landscape with a patch of water reflecting light at the heart of the dark surroundings.

In my estimation, Micheal Zarowsky's magnificent works have pride of place among the watercolours. His paintings of evergreens laden with snow capture the glory of Canadian winter in a way that makes you want to snatch one out of the heat of Nathan Phillips Square and take it home where it can cool you down.

Passing one booth, I thought: "This artist is copying Thrush Holmes". But it turned out that this was, in fact, the work of Thrush Holmes. (What tipped me off were the neon bars in the paintings such as the ones I'd seen in his Queen Street gallery this past winter.) One of the newer works that appeals to me very much is a huge painting of a lopsided, dilapidated house with brilliant, multi-coloured strips covering one of the upper windows.

Other artists and their works that I was glad to see again: Stewart Jones with his dynamic compositions based mostly on the walls of old buildings in industrial sites downtown; Dorion Scott with her large, glowing still lives of things like a slip and a pair of nylons; Burigude Zhang's minimalist black and white abstracts; the wood block prints of still lives by Tyler Baylis; Marjolyn van der Hart's teeming yet strongly composed views of city life; Paul Robert Turner's larger-than-life, superbly painted and attention-getting portraits.

A delightful discovery for me was the work of Gordon Leverton who makes wonderful compositions using the geometric patterns found in older, inner-city houses. In a rectilinear style that, I suspect, owes much to Mondrian, Mr. Leverton's use of strong, flat colours and his eye for interesting shapes capture the visual interest of urban life in a unique way. His medium: pastel on sandpaper. When I commented that this must use up a lot of pastels, he noted, "And fingernails."

Among other artists whose cityscapes express something special are James Olley who captures the glassy dazzle of modern architecture and Rebecca Ott who finds majesty in the sweeping undersides

## Summer Mysteries '07

July 20/07

of expressways. David Ray Alexander and David Marshak have similar approaches to the city, managing, with a photo-realism style, to convey a sort of bleak beauty in what might be considered dreary views of streets and alleys.

June 28/07

June 8/07

Since watercolour is our first love here at *Dilettante's Diary*, at least in terms of visual art, mention must be made of several excellent specimens. In the traditional vein, Yaohua Yan produces light, loose transparent scenes and Alfred Ng's flowers are executed with meticulous perfection. Sherrill Girard's florals and still lives, on the other hand, are brighter and bolder. Julia Harris shows several of the charming chickens and birds like the one in her painting in the show of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour last fall, while her watery glimpses of Venice have an evocative, mysterious appeal. With something of a sense of humour, each of the well-executed watercolours in Jimmy Pierre's series shows a person on a bicycle, from behind, with not much context other than a shadow on the ground. Dashes of bright colour are provided by details like an umbrella or a hockey shirt.

May 21/07

May 2/07

April 14/07

March 23/07

## Toronto Art Expo 2007

March 8/07

Feb 16/07

Feb 2/07

Jan 24/07

In a somewhat more innovative style of watercolour, Ilyana Martinez does cartoony, free-flowing pictures with dashes of jewel-like colour. They look like doodles but they bear close scrutiny to dig out their enigmatic meanings. Todd Tremeer offers several unframed watercolours in traditional style but his more recent work uses gouache as well to create an intriguing series of pictures on military themes. You may see an armoured tank, for instance, placed on what looks like a toy version of a field. Mr. Tremeer says that much of this work has been done in war museums and, in his view, it comments on the intersection where history, illustration and fine art collide. One of the watercolours that I particularly liked pictured a group of soldiers from what looks to be the Napoleonic Era, as seen from above, the yellow tops of their caps making a striking composition.

## Notables of 2006

Dec 27/06

December 11/06

November 28/06

Nov 8/06

October 14/06

Sept 22/06

In terms simply of painterly accomplishment, there are Glenn Chadwick's mouth-watering apples and oranges glowing on their branches against blue skies, Anita Niemeyer's still lives of fruits and vegetables that crowd the canvas deliciously and Tracy Douglas' slightly surrealistic still lives against turbulent skies. In a style that I would describe as modern classic, Michael Gerry turns out expert renditions of factories, as well as still lives and landscapes, among other things. When it comes to capturing the vast, eerie emptiness of the Canadian landscape, you can't beat Laura Culic's brooding oils.

Moving towards abstraction, there is Mark Resmer's gutsy composition of yellows, blacks and greys in vertical stripes that suggest a forest. Janice Tayler's jagged shapes in vivid colours hint at landscapes in a semi-abstract way. In the fully abstract vein, Kathleen Weich's paintings, featuring mostly squares and rectangles in blues, greys and whites have an ultra-cool appeal, while Emilie Rondeau's abstracts in stronger colours, featuring a lot of circular shapes, have a more buoyant feel.

## Ring Psycho (Wagner on CBC Radio)

Sept 6/06

August 12/06

July 18/06

June 27/06

June 9/06

May 23/06

One example of stand-out drawing is the work of Beata Tyralla whose human figures resonate with dynamism and passion. Another artist whose work is categorized as drawing, Anne Renouf does what amount to collages, using oil pastels and graphite. The results are somewhat spooky and strange, but fascinating in a minimalistic way – an example of the kind of weirdness that you always hope to find in a show like this. In a somewhat similar vein, there are Eric Cator's simple but quirky paintings of subjects like a sound man holding a microphone on a long boom over a fire hydrant. Peter A. Barelkowski's paintings feature odd groupings of people and objects, executed in a hasty, primitive style but suggesting some ominous, nightmarish story. Lise Carruthers paints still lives and interiors that look fairly traditional except for some bizarre details. Also in the unconventional mode, Yi Song finds contemplative moments in pale, greyish studies of bits of furniture found at odd angles in corners of rooms.

## Me In Manhattan

May 2/06

April 12/06

March 17/06

March 9/06

Feb 16/06

Feb 1/06

While photography isn't our primary quest in these outings, there were some photographers whose work caught my attention for some reason or other. Bill Pusztai shows photos mostly featuring parts of the body of a hairy man in striking compositions but the picture that struck me as particularly beautiful was one that looks up at a collection of high-rise office buildings rising darkly into the mist. Another photographer whose skill at composition impressed me is Alexander Tavis. His photos of city scenes have a strong impact thanks to the balance of shapes. Kirsten White's photo of a fully-dressed man sitting on the edge of a bathtub, his back to the camera, and a big, black dog lying on the floor, has a disturbing effect – appropriately, given the story behind the picture. Ms. White explained that this was a photo of her father who had tried to kill himself in that bathroom. "But he's doing better now," she said.

Jan 11/06

Dec 31/05

Dec 12/05

Nov 25/05

Nov 4/05

Oct 24/05

Sept 7/05

Sept 16/05

Sept 1/05

Aug 10/05

July 21/05

Me and the Jays

July 10/05

June 15/05

May 18/05

April 27/05

April 18/05

April 8/05

March 21/05

Feb 28/05

Feb 21/05

Feb 4/05

Jan 28/05

Jan 19/05

Jan 5/05

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PLAYS

Before leaving, I was looking desperately for that something shocking, something really offensive that you always hope to find at such a show. No such traumatizing work did turn up, but I was pleased, in the end, to discover a couple of very exciting young artists. Scott Pattinson paints exuberant abstracts that explode with life, energy and brilliant colour. Some of the best of them seem to have an organic inevitability that holds them together with a coherence that many abstract paintings lack. Mr. Pattinson let me in on one of his secrets: he often starts with a small sculpture as the basis for his composition. Lately, he's been working on a series of paintings based on photos from an old barn. He turns them into abstracts by focusing on certain details and lighting effects.

The other young artist whose work thrilled me is Cam Forbes, a young, curly-haired woman brimming with vitality and enthusiasm for the creative process. As is unusual among oil painters, she does all her work on location. This ensures a breezy spontaneity in the work. A couple of the best examples in the landscape category are a forest scene and a field in Saskatchewan. Both paintings have an immediacy of impression and feeling that you don't get in the studied, careful works of studio painters, no matter how skilled they are. Lately, Ms. Forbes has taken to installing herself in glassed-in bus shelters to paint city scenes. Sometimes the ribs of the shelter, as seen from inside, provide an ironic framework to the scene. Thus, you get a take on city life as you've never seen it before. With lots of canvas left unpainted, the pictures have a sketchy quality – which is part of their appeal. Yet, underlying them, are a very deft hand at drawing and a great eye for composition. Truly a unique body of work.

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OTHER STUFF: Art Exhibitions, Concerts, etc.

