

English reports

Volume 46, Number 187, Summer 2002

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/52892ac>

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Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

0042-5435 (print)

1923-3183 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

(2002). Review of [English reports]. *Vie des Arts*, 46(187), 91–95.

SACKVILLE, NB

SALON HANGING

March 15–September 29, 2002

Owens Art Gallery
Mount Allison University
61 York St., Sackville,
NB E4L 1E1

Tel.: 506 536-2574

Every two years, the Owens Art Gallery hangs part of its collection in much the same manner that it was hung at the end of the 19th century. The Owens first opened its doors on the Mount Allison campus in 1895 after the collection was transferred there lock, stock, and barrel from Saint John, New Brunswick. Much of this original collection of some 300 hundred works was gathered in Europe by the artist John Hammond earlier in the century. He came with the paintings to Sackville taking on the role of painting and drawing instructor at the campus. The collection became a major pedagogical tool for Hammond, whose students learned their craft by copying paintings and by drawing from plaster copies of antique sculpture. Put together for this purpose, the collection also reflected the conservative tastes of Hammond and his patron John Owens.

The present Owens Art Gallery had photographs of the original hanging of the collection and used them as the basis for this exhibition. The gallery is blessed with what is called the *high wall gallery* (a two story space), a spectacular venue for the exhibition. The gallery walls have been painted a deep red which was the fashion in the 19th century. While an effort has been made to put some paintings in the same locations as in 1895, other 19th century pictures in this exhibition came to the collection at a later date. The effect of the salon hanging is in no way hindered by these additions, but instead is strengthened, as many later works are of a higher quality than the original collection. However, it is not the individual quality of the works that is important, but, rather, the overall effect of seeing all of these works presented in a way modern viewers are not used to. In 1895, pictures were generally hung from floor to ceiling and in pretty much of a jumble, but there is nothing haphazard in the current exhibition. The collection was hung with great care and is probably much nicer than viewers would have found it displayed at the end of the 19th century.

While the Owens Art Gallery was, until 1965, also the art school, today



Salon Hanging
Wall 1

it has a collection of well over 3000 works and a full programme of rotating exhibitions that covers every aspect of art from the historic to the contemporary. You will no longer find, as at the end of the 19th century, women art students carefully copying a Landseer in the gallery. Now you are more likely to find a video installation or a one person exhibition of a Toronto or Montreal artist. Even so, the salon hanging is still one of the gallery's most popular exhibitions and brings new viewers to the gallery each time it is hung. Perhaps because it is so sentimental and narrative, the exhibition still strikes a chord with the average viewer for whom contemporary art is so difficult to fathom.

The gallery provides a guide to the exhibition which will help identify some of the individual pictures unique to this collection. These include the Pre-Raphaelite artists John Everett Millais (*Playing Marbles*) and Edward Burne-Jones (*Tree of Golden Apples*), and all sorts of Barbizon School works by the likes of Louis Welden Hawkins and Wyatt Eaton. For something completely different, there is a rather strange copy of the *Mona Lisa* by one C. Velten that has caused more than one viewer over the years to say to the gallery staff: "I thought that picture was in Paris!"

This exhibition is a fine example of how styles and fashions change over the years. The art in the exhibition has not changed, but the way we look at it has. When many of these pictures were bought by John Hammond they were contemporary, though even by the standards of the day, conservative. Now, with the passage of time, they have become historic art. (Hammond could have bought Impressionist art, but did not. He likely paid more money for the conservative art he bought than if he had been more adventurous, but that

is another story.) Presented in what is now considered the normal way to show works in a gallery "lined up single file on a white wall", we would look at them differently than in a salon hanging style, where a single picture is just a part of the whole. Something can be said for the idea that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This is certainly the case with this outstanding exhibition. It is well worth seeing, particularly because it provides a window into how art was viewed a hundred years ago. With a better understanding of history we can hopefully avoid repeating its mistakes. Let us not forget the old Latin saying: *ars longa, vita brevis* (art is long, but life is short).

Virgil Hammock

MONTREAL

LUDMILA ARMATA:

GRAPHIC LIFE IN BLACK
AND WHITE

March, 2002

Galerie McClure
Visual Arts Centre
350 Victoria Ave.
Westmount

Etching is a difficult and unforgiving medium, but it also has its whimsy. Ludmila Armata plays it like a fine instrument with the deftness and audacity of a virtuoso performer. The work she produces makes her one of the most interesting and accomplished printmakers in Quebec, and she has the awards to prove it. She was this year's recipient of the Grand Prize in Loto Quebec's 2002 Printmaking Competition and a prize winner at last year's Biennale de l'Estampe et du Papier du Quebec in Alma, 1996. Armata likewise won grand prize at the Biennial of Graphic Art in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1996. Shifting and engraving heavy metal

plates is a physically demanding practice, but with Armata the process has resulted in some unexpectedly delicate images that dance the fine line between abstraction and representation. "I have always thought of the creative process as being like a chain of interconnected impacts, emotions, decisions, incisions," Armata explains. "I try to avoid narration, to shut it down as much as possible."

The smallest prints scattered around the gallery are absolutely delightful nuggets of ideas, some of which she later translates into larger works. Organic and surreal, these prints are like contemporary visual haikus, marked by the artist's irreverent sense of humour and her mastery of the medium.

Stretch, a magnificent oil stick on vellum drawing rips through the surface space like a frenzied, frenetic gash. Like a giant stain metamorphosing into a human form, it stretches upward and downward, headless yet imbued with a frighteningly living energy.

This primordial mass, determined to be born, to walk, is like the very core of the artist. It pushes outward with an unbridled, creative energy, looking for new ways to express itself. One gets the feeling, that at times, the very demands of the arduous process of printmaking are simply too slow for this energy to

Ludmila Armata
Urne, 2001
Etch and drypoint



take shape, and so Armata reaches for the immediate, the pure gesture, literally tearing, ripping into the paper with an audacity that stems from a well of emotions that her urns can no longer contain.

Dorota Kozinska

ERIC DAUDELIN:

BLANC, NOIR
ET LASSITUDE

Until May 18, 2002

Galerie Yergeau,
2060 Joly

Tel.: 843-0955

Fax: 849-2421

celny@videotron.ca

Eric Daudelin is an artist thinker. His miniature works reflect a clear understanding of how to communicate visual thoughts, notes, ideas... His artwork can be more interesting than many so-called "renowned" artists because he seizes on reality for his visual clues and executes his work with a modesty and economy that is rare. The art, he seems to say, is out there, and just needs an aesthetic framework to describe it. Daudelin creates those aesthetic parameters, as, for instance with a series of miniature time sequence

black and white photos of a white material in flux on an air vent grill. The effect is Haiku-like, almost Japanese in character, sublime and simple in effect. The same goes for the selenium photo series titled *Croix de chemin* (1998) or *Pont Marie, Paris* (2001) where haphazard asphalt and paint marks on cement can look like stitchings or concrete abstracts. Photographed close-up, these magical abstract incantations are more interesting than many intentional "painterly" abstracts. The magic is in the way Daudelin composes each photo, frames the parameters and defines the visual aesthetic (always reality-based) in each piece.

The *Écrits* (2001) series of etchings are simple mimetic linear arrangements in columns. Not words, just very poetic, all traces of time. The only painting, *Deuxième Blanc* (2000) mixes oil and earth, and mimics the icy form in an adjacent photo piece titled *-30C*. The summer counterpart, *+30C*, is simply a faint green cube of grass surrounded by dry earth. Eric Daudelin is an artist/photographer whose art has a modesty to it, a sensitivity and taste for a life that is lived.

John K. Grande



Betty Goodwin

Vest three, 1970
59.2 x 45 cm

OTTAWA

THE PRINTS OF BETTY GOODWIN

May 31–September 2, 2002

National Gallery of Canada
380 Sussex Dr.

Ottawa, Ont. K1N 9N4

Tel.: 613-990-1985

<http://national.gallery.ca>

Since the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts landmark Betty Goodwin show in 1988 which featured her *Swimmer* and *Carbon* series from the 1980s, Canadians have come to appreciate her work. Goodwin's subsequent exhibition at Galerie René Blouin in 1989, seems to a degree to have been influenced by Goodwin's early printmaking experience. It included her *The Steel Notes* series of sculptural assemblages. These pieces included everything from nails, fine copper wire joiners, metal filings and delicate locks of hair along with steel plates. When Betty Goodwin began producing printmaking in the 1960s, Pop art was in full flower. Pop was a movement that

naturally favoured the use of commercial print techniques to disseminate art. What followed were a series of Goodwin artworks that used everything from hats, parcels, tins, shirts, gloves, and vests. These seemingly everyday objects were part of a language anyone could understand, but they likewise carried a history with them and markings, traces of life.

The 100 prints and related works gathered for the National Gallery of Canada's current exhibition date primarily from 1968 to 1975, a period when Betty Goodwin was establishing the language of expression she has become known for. The NGC has the largest collection anywhere of artworks by Betty Goodwin. It includes 4 sculptures, 1 painting, 32 drawings and 212 prints. A catalogue written by Rosemarie Tovell, Curator of Canadian Prints and drawings at the National Gallery of Canada, accompanies this exhibition. *The Prints of Betty Goodwin* opens a window for the public into understanding the early artistic endeavors of one of Canada's most appreciated and recognized artists.

John K. Grande



Eric Daudelin
Marylin (detail), 2001
Digital printing
76 cm x 56 cm



Lynne Cohen
Model Living Room, 1976
 Gelatin silver print
 111 cm x 129 cm

OTTAWA

LYNNE COHEN:

NO MAN'S LAND

Feb. 1–May 12th, 2002

National Gallery of Canada
 380 Sussex Dr.
 Ottawa, Ont. K1N 9N4

<http://national.gallery.ca>

Lynne Cohen has, for thirty years, produced an incredible collection of photographs. Devoid of people, these empty spaces, borrow from industrial photography, yet they look dead, devoid of life, and anesthetized. They evidence contemporary reality and document the real life spaces we would largely disregard as art or photography, and that are not usually thought to be part of the popular mythology of art.

American-born Canadianized Cohen is best known for the living rooms, motels, halls, labs, show-rooms, classrooms, and factories of the ordinary she has photographed. She uncovers the quirky eccentricities of these places as if life were a stage. The scenes and spaces look like theatre props and scenarios. The absence of people is disquieting. Cohen strangely twists these places of clean steel, chrome and glass into potential abattoirs of the contemporary psyche. She doesn't intrude and her aesthetic neutrality is quite disquieting, (even very Canadian). It is as if Lynne Cohen has to remove her identity like clothing to capture and

order reality in her photo compositions. Her aesthetic is unmediated and 1980s.

Some of these photos are tinged with a sardonic sense of humour and irony, something that dates their aesthetic, but make them also more fun. A recent book *No Man's Land: The Photographs of Lynne Cohen* co-published by The National Gallery of Canada and Thames & Hudson includes an even greater selection of images, similar to those in the show. In the book, we see Cohen's photo *Factory* (1994), a series of identical assembly line heads and torsos for future window display mannequins in the process of being "born". *Military Installation* (1998) with its seven doll-like figurines on synthetic carpeting fluorescent lighting and TV monitor, looks austere but equally ludicrous. Are these kids or adults playing these war games? We get a sense of how technology has abstracted our view of the world in *Military Installation* (2000). Here, a Canadian armored vehicle has its turret pointed towards a fake panoramic landscape with standard topographical features and sky. Fictional reality becomes a training ground for real life death... A work from 1998 has a man in military gear (or is he a mannequin?) seated and moving down a hall with installed indoor tracking. This *Endgame* photo is symmetry personified.

Laboratory (1996) has a synthetic torso all wired up with no place to go that is worthy of the film *Bladerunner*. This torso has a fully detailed facial expression. He looks like a talk show host but his lower half is just an austere, dull metal

stand. Another photo titled *Factory* displays another section of a mannequin assembly plant (Is this the leg and ass department?). There is something of Cindy Sherman, Louise Lawler, or Hans Bellmer here, but Cohen's *in situ* compositions were never conceived as art. They were just there and are so *au naturel*.

Over 65 of Cohen's black and white gelatine silver print and colour dye coupler photographs are on view for this show. These photos document a reality, but between the images, and under the surface of all of Lynne Cohen's photography, there is this sense that reality itself is a kind of fiction or hyper-designed dream. The dichotomy between virtually defined, designed space and reality as a form of truth is a theme Cohen persistently pushes. The natural style evident in her earlier photos seems to have changed. The more recent works are obsessive, in their treatment of controlled, organized space, and monitored reality. This is part of what makes Lynne Cohen's remarkable photographic output so strong, her persistent adherence to one approach to photo documentation. These non-spaces that Cohen captures actually exist, and are a largely unseen part of contemporary reality. Neutral, generic, these photos make a statement about contemporary life in so-called civilized societies. They evidence places that are rigid, inflexible and remarkably inhuman, where 1st world activities like medical laboratory research, military training and other kinds of formalized labour take place. Lynne Cohen's photos witness all this with a sense of candor and sublime unreality.

John K. Grande

Stephen Schofield

Swell
 Polymerized cement, fibreglass mixture
 and filled with polyurethane

TORONTO

STEPHEN SCHOFIELD:

SWELL

May 8–Sept. 15th

Toronto Sculpture Garden
 115 King St. East

Tel.: 416-526-9563

SWELL, Stephen Schofield's latest sculpture has a poetic cadence and sexual sense seen in earlier works presented at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Toronto's Power Plant and Montreal's CIAC. The Toronto piece developed naturally out of a drawing of wind-whipped clothes on a line Schofield made. His response to this initial inspiration, now on view at the Toronto Sculpture Garden, is an amorphous and playful sculpture. An uneven and somewhat awkward looking structure of metal piping becomes the frame onto which a series of appendages hang. These beautiful colourful biomorphs, made of a polymerized cement and fibreglass mixture and filled with polyurethane, are pure post-Pop in spirit. They look seemingly unclassifiable. There is still some of that inflated hybridized feel here, as seen in Schofield's previous cloth and rubber glove pieces. The forms spread out from their (invisible) centres. Some of the appendages have what look like feet or arms protruding like tentacles out of them. The tactile and sensual (emission or emotion) and feeling of physical fragility are a universal in all of Stephen Schofield's art.

In spirit, Schofield's biomorphs share something in common with Juan Miro's plastic sculptural forms because they are so unabashedly synthetic and hybrid in conception and realization. The curvilinear surfaces



are crinkled in varying degrees according to the plastic used to wrap each form as a mold. These works recall Schofield's early forays into working with clay as a young artist. The mystery that pervades SWELL is precisely because they look taboo and the aesthetic doesn't look mainstream. SWELL treads a fine line between presence and absence, the visible and invisible, the seen and unseen to great effect. The ultimate realization is that there is no resolution of formal properties or qualities.

Part of Schofield's purpose with SWELL seems to be to defy the traditional site sensitive or functional labels that most public art and sculptural commissions adhere to. As opposed to site sensitive work, Schofield's work from the inside out, from inner senses outwards into space. The idiom is expressive and impressive for the layout and promiscuity of forms is daring, particularly as the industrial piping holding the whole piece together has not been embellished. Individually, Schofield's forms look isolated, but they exist as a loose and intermittent grouping that follows the raised piping as it wends its way through the garden space.

Douglas Gordon
Black Spot, 2000.
 Digital C-print.
 Collection of Mark & Vanessa Mathysen-Gerst.
 Courtesy of Gagolian Gallery, New York.

Stephen Schofield plays willfully with the ambiguity of reconstructed meanings and associations, and what looks innocent could actually have some sexual connotation. These amorphous baubles are like bodies attached by chance and affected by random occurrences like the twisting whitish form amidst the rest, that recreates the original clothesline motif that inspired this piece. As Schofield says: "I've often asked myself when the outside ends and the inside begins..."

John K. Grande

VANCOUVER

DOUGLAS GORDON: FILMIC RE-PRESENTATION(S)

March 9–June 16, 2002

Vancouver Art Gallery
 750 Hornby St.
 Vancouver, B.C.
 V6Z 2H7

Tel: 604-662-4700
 Fax: 604-682-1086

A little square of light levitates at eye-level before a black wall. Moving closer, the beam resolves into an image of an inverted housefly. Even before considering the picture, the viewer will be amazed by this spare illusion. While touch reveals the image to be flush with the wall, the eye remains unconvinced: the glowing square seems to hover at least four

inches into space. The second surprise is a sudden movement from a tiny video monitor that occurs every few seconds. In a futile attempt to right itself, the fly kicks furiously, and then just as suddenly, stops. That the struggle in this animated still life has no effect suggests that the insect is glued to the table. *Film Noir (Fly)* is perhaps the most uncanny and affecting work by Douglas Gordon at the Vancouver Art Gallery. In an exhibition replete with generously spaced large, projected video installations, photographs and wall texts, this postage stamp-sized video steals the show.

Scottish artist Douglas Gordon is famous for winning the Turner Prize while still in his twenties (1996) and for his re-presentations of classic Hollywood film noir movies. I went to this exhibition prepared for disappointment. What is a 35 year old artist doing having a retrospective? How could he fill such a huge space? I expected cleverness spread thinly.

The work is clever, in the best and fullest sense of the word. Each installation is well crafted, intelligent and witty. Gordon is a conceptual artist interested in identity, reproduction, authorship, audience and pleasure and filters these through his sensibility. Gordon's works are the records and experiments of a restless imagination interested in the very processes of being and becoming. Rather than burden us with his wounds and plead for empathy, Gordon appears amused by his own construction and wants to pass on this curiosity and his findings to viewers. Horace Walpole once said, "This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel." Douglas Gordon seems to be a thinker interested in feelings.

Among the many installations on view one finds Gordon's famous *24 Hour Psycho*, a silent, crawling version of the Hitchcock thriller. The idea is simple and riveting. While it would be impossible to maintain attention for the day long run of the film, stumbling into sections is oddly intoxicating. You find yourself attending to ridiculous details, held in frustrated anticipation, wanting to leave and yet willing to wait for the next thrilling change in Janet Leigh's expression. An artwork for autistics, the world is silenced and slowed for leisurely consumption. Especially during the shower scene, we are not only made self-conscious of our voyeurism, but are given ample time to interrogate it, if we don't flee first. Like Hitchcock, Gordon is interested in affect, and in reception more than expression. Both are also preoccupied with making the viewer aware of the sadomasochism that underlies

the film experience. *Film Noir (Fly)* is an eloquent metaphor that not only describes the director (who fixes the fly to the table and the noir hero to his dark fate) as a sadist, but implicates the viewer in the same project.

In an interview with David Sylvester, Douglas Gordon explains that during his art school years, he lost pleasure in watching movies. The analytical skills he learned caused him to read and deconstruct the mechanisms of the film rather than just enjoy the movie. There is a great pleasure to be found in turning off the meaning making machine in our heads and letting the art effect work on us. I think Gordon uses *film noir* movies because he likes them, and he likes them because they offer a glimpse at the darker aspects of the culture that constructed him. Utilitarian nostalgia provides the informing principals of those who raised us. These secret meanings are less read than understood. I have nothing to say before *Film Noir (Fly)* and nothing I can say will help. And yet I am flooded by memories of my own petty cruelties.

David Garneau

VICTORIA, B.C.

MEDRIE MACPHEE & LANDON MACKENZIE:

DOUBLE VISION

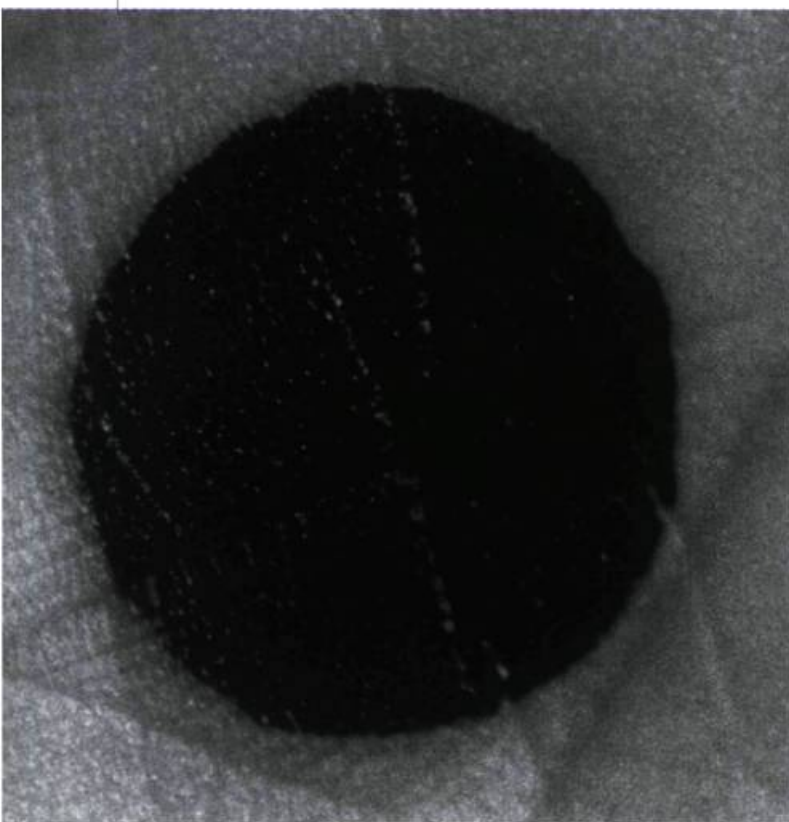
March 22–June 30, 2002

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
 1040 Moss Street, Victoria, B.C.
 V8V 4P1

Tel: 250-384-4101
 Fax: 250-361-3995
 aggv@aggv.bc.ca

Landon Mackenzie (Vancouver) and Medrie MacPhee (New York) are two artists whose paintings destabilize our traditional notion of landscape and the physical relationship they bring to one another. They share intellectual backgrounds informed by the discourses of abstraction, feminism, and conceptualism. Both artists remain connected through an intricate exchange of ideas and language (both real and virtual) and share a complex layering and structuring, embedded with personal histories and fictions. Their works challenge how we think about location.

Medrie MacPhee's eight paintings in the AGG's *Double Vision* show are meticulously constructed, characterized by "life forms" and follow a long meditation on survival. Recent MacPhee surrogates have





Medrie MacPhee
The State of Things, 2002

been hybrids derived from industrial cast-offs with body parts and internal organs, an examination of the connections between bioforms and technology. Disturbing and hilarious, potent and flaccid, deformed and elegant, these mutants sustain themselves in irradiated landscapes, colour fields of intense opacity that allow entry. *The State of Things* (2002), is a painting that embodies Stephen Jay Gould's notion that if we (the human species) die out, "...we'll be replaced by some strange forms of bacteria and other odd, unimaginable hybrids." Six elements co-inhabit a landscape of saturated colour, a space glowing with radioactivity, illuminated from within. The left side is paired with a fragment of industrial detritus and an erotic airbag. The right side supports a pair of exhausted, plant-like prostheses. In the space between, a forked bone, a furcula, floats accompanied at a distance by small, fleshy tissue fragments, possibly from an inner ear. Dissolving the boundaries between actual space and the illusionary space of painting, Medrie MacPhee's paintings work like classical frescoes. We enter into her future world and are changed by the dysfunctional mutants who reside there.

In the adjacent AGGV gallery, four large scale paintings from Landon Mackenzie's *Tracking Athabasca* series (1998-2000) are on view, a body of work that evolved out of her *Saskatchewan* paintings (1993-1997). The under structure for the later works are actual 18th and 19th century maps of the northern border between Alberta and Saskatchewan, i.e. the Northwest Territories. Mining the histories of exploration—texts from early explorers, fur traders, and seekers of the

Northwest Passage, Mackenzie the artist/cartographer transcribes these onto canvases that resemble the shapes of maps. These palimpsests are further obliterated by the artist's energetic reworkings, paint layerings and adding of embellishments such as doilies, beads and glass, all this in an effort to develop a highly personal, part real, part imagined narrative. *Space Station (Falls Said to be the Largest in the Known World So Far)* remaps the night sky as seen perhaps from Jupiter and contains a stunning array of celestial elements. Constellations cluster around a small gridded area of colourful lines, a visual reference to early space structures used to map the Northern territories. Mackenzie's red "fallopian tube entrance" disrupts the implied space odyssey with a more sensuous image, one that is corporeal and intimate. In *Macke it to Thy Other Side (Land of Little Sticks)* a dialogue between the artist and a Native woman develops. Visual elements include yellow blobs, meant to represent 1950's uranium mine sites at Lake Athabasca.

Landon Mackenzie's revisions are postmodern and subvert the utopian idealism of modernist painting and literature. Coincidentally, her research is encoded with the ideas she attempts to undermine. What emerges is a cacophony of sounds, discordant echoes of silenced histories and these paintings become repositories of this music. Transcribing geography, they reconstruct spaces of dislocated consciousness. Both Mackenzie and MacPhee's paintings are encrusted with information, memory, and desire. Worlds of intricate beauties and unresolved relationships are re-imagined. Theirs is a postmodern, dystopian vision of layered displacements (Mackenzie), and cyborg hybrids (MacPhee).

Linda Giles

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